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Maestría en Lengua Inglesa y Lingüística Aplicada

**“THE ENHANCEMENT OF PRAGMATIC SKILLS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING
BASED ON COLLABORATIVE GROUP WORK IN A PRE-INTERMEDIATE
ENGLISH CLASS IN “SAGRADOS CORAZONES” SECONDARY SCHOOL”**

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RESUMEN

Se reconoce que el aprendizaje de una lengua implica el reconocimiento y el uso de la gramática y el vocabulario que comunica el significado pretendido. Concretamente, en el aprendizaje de un lenguaje también es necesario conocer las expresiones lingüísticas apropiadas dentro de un contexto específico (que se resumen en este documento como "pragmática"). Para llevar a cabo con eficacia, se piensa que es aconsejable que un maestro fomente a los estudiantes el trabajar en colaboración usando habilidades pragmáticas. Una revisión de la literatura sugiere que al mejorar las habilidades pragmáticas trabajando en grupos pueden influir en la claridad del uso del lenguaje de los estudiantes. Este estudio de investigación informa de cómo se fomenta a estudiantes ecuatorianos con un nivel pre-intermedio de inglés para utilizar expresiones pragmáticas mientras trabajan juntos en grupos de colaboración usando instrucción explícita. Un pre-prueba que implica cuestiones pragmáticas y ejemplos, y un post-test que miden la capacidad de los estudiantes para reconocer y utilizarlos se administraron a dos clases con 16 participantes en cada uno. La observación del maestro también se llevó a cabo para analizar la forma en que los participantes se comportan mientras se trabaja con otros. Los participantes fueron también entrevistados para mencionar sus percepciones luego del estudio. Los resultados sugieren que el grupo de tratamiento se comportó mejor que el grupo control cuando se fomenta la utilización de expresiones pragmáticas que fueron necesarias para comunicarse simplemente, así como con ideas más complicadas al trabajar en colaboración con sus grupos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: la pragmática, grupo de trabajo colaborativo, el aprendizaje, las actividades comunicativas.



ABSTRACT

It is acknowledged that learning a language involves the recognition and use of grammar and vocabulary that communicates the intended meaning. More specifically, learning a language also requires knowing the appropriate language expressions within a specific context (summarized in this paper by the concept of “pragmatics”). To effectively accomplish this, it is thought to be advisable for a teacher to encourage students to work collaboratively using pragmatic skills when working together. A review of the literature suggests that the enhancement of pragmatic skills and working in groups can influence students’ clarity of language use. This research study reports how pre-intermediate Ecuadorian students were encouraged to use pragmatic expressions while working together in collaborative groups with explicit instruction. A pre-test involving pragmatic issues and examples, and a post-test measuring students’ ability to recognize and use them were administered to two classes with 16 participants in each. Teacher observation was also carried out in both groups focusing on the way participants collaborate and interact with others. Participants were also interviewed to mention their perceptions about the project. The findings of this study suggest that the treatment group performed better than the control group when encouraged to use pragmatic expressions that were necessary to communicate ordinary as well as more complicated ideas and work collaboratively in their groups.

KEY WORDS: pragmatics, collaborative group work, learning, communicative activities.



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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate all my effort to my Lord Jesus for giving me life to carry out my goals to become a better person. I am so blessed to have my family in my life, especially my mother Julia and my daughter Vanessita. This work is also dedicated to them and all the people that helped me somehow to fulfill this project.



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Background and Justification

It is a fact that learning and communicating in the English language has become a necessity for people who are involved in different jobs or businesses since English is the most spoken language around the world. In the educational field, English teachers have to encourage students to communicate effectively when working together in the classroom so that they can use what they have learned on their own in authentic future situations.

One of the concerns to be dealt with by students is that communicating with others is related not only to the correct use of grammar or vocabulary, but the use of appropriate expressions according to the context in which a conversation takes place. Thus, pragmatics, “the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker or writer and interpreted by a listener or reader”, is the first important aspect to be considered in this study since learners can use different sets of pragmatic expressions through explicit instruction in order to communicate properly with others. The second aspect of this piece of research is connected to the use of collaborative language learning through communicative activities to be carried out in small groups.

The eleventh-grade students at “Sagrados Corazones” School, who belonged to a middle socio economical class were encouraged to work using a collaborative environment. Nevertheless, it was evidenced that students have problems in language classes as they are not naturally prepared to work collaboratively. It seems that the problem is two-fold: that the students do not have the necessary skills and strategies to work in this manner and, therefore, working together is not a process that they are familiar with. Also, the students at “Sagrados Corazones” school were tested by the Cambridge English Proficiency Test which showed that they had a pre-intermediate English level or A2 level (according to the Common European

Framework). The test showed that students lacked some of the basic skills needed to communicate effectively when they worked together. This was due to a number of factors, one of which was the students' lack of pragmatic skills that could be used in a collaborative L2 (Foreign Language) context.

Pragmatics has been a neglected area in the Ecuadorian teaching context. It is unusual to hear teachers planning pragmatic activities or discussing it in staff meetings, book reviews or curriculum checks and hence it is not taught at all in class. But then again, where traditional English language teaching is employed, grammar still seems to be a priority. This emphasis on English language teaching has been changing due to a new generation of teachers, who are more aware of the competencies a language learner must possess.

The course book titled “American More 4”, by Herbert Puchta et al. and published by Cambridge University Press bursts with features for lower-secondary students. It also includes reading, culture, grammar, vocabulary, skills and cross-curricular learning sections. This book is aimed at adolescents with an A2 level. The book’s philosophy is related to the students’ own identity by “exploring their capabilities, strengthening their self-esteem, and developing positive beliefs about themselves” (Nicholas et al. 5). However, the book is an example of poor use of pragmatic exercises or activities related to the development of pragmatic skills in group work activities. The textbook was chosen by Cambridge counselors who explained to the teachers of the institution the characteristics of it at first sight. Thus, this study hopes to be significant as it focuses on both pragmatic skills and the collaborative aspects that are relevant to becoming a competent English speaker.

Researchers like Kasper and Schmidt, note that developing pragmatic competence is not a subordinate aspect, but primary when learning a language

(Kasper and Schmidt 1). That is why textbooks should include a diversity of communicative and pragmatic activities which learners can use in order to help each other so as to become competent speakers.

Teaching teenagers has been a great challenge for teachers around the world. While working with 16 to 18-year-old students, there can be a number of situations in which students do not show consideration to each other or are not aware of a polite way to communicate with others. It becomes worthwhile to help students analyze and appreciate how important it is to use appropriate language expressions in order to communicate effectively when they work together.

Collaborative group work activities appear to be useful ways of enhancing an aspect of pragmatics, as well as encouraging positive interdependence between the students on the one hand, and the teacher and her students on the other. Instead of thinking competitively and individualistically, students should be encouraged to work cooperatively. That is the reason why the teacher-researcher of the present study introduced a set of pragmatic expressions which enhanced the pragmatic linguistic skills required to work collaboratively.

Introduction

Learning a language in order to communicate effectively is not only about the act of speaking or creating utterances in an attempt to transmit ideas adequately. Language is actually “a complex act that is context-dependent and that varies in purpose” (Lee and VanPatten 2). Teachers should take advantage of all the aspects of communication through developing tasks that promote real communication in the classroom.

One of the elements required to achieve efficient communication is that of pragmatics, which is often overlooked by both teachers and learners. Pragmatics as defined in this research is “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (Crystal 240).

Regarding the issue of *pragmatics* in this study, it is necessary to mention significant information about its importance. In the article, *Pragmatics*, from MED (Macmillan English Dictionaries) webzine, Joanna Channel argues the importance of pragmatics as follows:

All languages have a set of pragmatic conventions about language use. These conventions are social and cultural. So they differ from language to language, from country to country, and from culture to culture. It is important to learn about the pragmatic conventions of English so as to be able to make full use of the words you know and to avoid mistakes (par.6).

Thus, taking into consideration the considerable importance that pragmatics has in order to be a proficient English-speaking learner, it is necessary to mention a simple but original idea about pragmatics. Pragmatics is the study that goes beyond enunciating a few words; it is a competence of knowing *how* to act and *how* to say things so as to make sure our message carries the right meaning to the listener. Now, if enunciating some words is not enough, is there a communicative approach that embodies all elements that are present in conversation? There might be, but in the Ecuadorian context English is not taught in such a way. In class, teachers attempt to make students speak without taking pragmatics into account and so they focus their efforts and energy on speaking tasks that do not fully or appropriately convey the intended message meaning. Next, the aim of every conversation is to transmit a message. Students must be encouraged to use an entire set of communication “rules” when learning to communicate in a foreign language and many of these communication rules are related to pragmatics. As Ishihara and Cohen state, learning pragmatics is viewed “not only as a cognitive process but also as a social phenomenon” (13). Namely, learning to use language by taking into consideration which expressions to use appropriately is necessary to communicate effectively in a specific social context.

A second element to be described in this study is related to the use of collaborative learning through developing group work activities which encourage students to work collaboratively when working together. “In collaborative work, learners work together in small groups, aiming towards a common goal” (qtd. in Nunan 33). Thus, it is important to cite here a clear definition for “collaboration”. “Collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respect the abilities and

contributions of their peers" (Panitz 1). With this definition in mind, it is quite important to point out that one of the most effective ways of encouraging students to communicate is setting up tasks that let them learn in a collaborative way when working in groups. According to Ellis, when a task is given to be done by pairs or small groups, there can be more advantages to achieve a successful outcome of language acquisition (272). The present study is a quasi-experimental-qualitative-statistical piece of research related with the extent to which the application of collaborative group work activities including the explicit and implicit instruction of a set of pragmatic expressions might improve students' pragmatic awareness. The participants involved in this project were two intact classes of 16 students each at "Sagrados Corazones" High School in Cuenca, Ecuador. This is a private Catholic high school located in the Otorongo district of Cuenca.

The study was carried out during 10 weeks and involved 32 hours of instruction. The students were in 11th Grade (aged 16-18) and are all female.

During the research period, the treatment group was given tasks focusing on collaborative group work, while the control group was taught as prescribed by the syllabus. In addition, the treatment group was to use a set of pragmatic expressions while working in their groups.

In order to establish the level of pragmatic awareness among students, a pre-test was administered to both the treatment and the control group. The expressions used in the test were related to the language functions such as agreeing and disagreeing, acknowledging contributions, showing politeness with others and giving encouragement when completing tasks.

Both intact and control groups were also given a post-test to establish the effectiveness of the methodology applied, so this part of the research was quasi-

experimental. The researcher attempted to determine descriptive statistical values. Also, the use of statistical inference studies were applied in this study. Finally, qualitative research was done using teacher observation was carried out in both groups focusing on collaboration, interaction and engagement. Further, the teacher-researcher held focus group discussions with the students of the treatment group.

Study Design

1. Problem statement

As mentioned above, eleventh grade students at "Sagrados Corazones" high school need to work in groups in order to develop English projects that let them be responsible for their learning. However, it was evidenced that the students did not use the correct words or expressions to communicate and understand each other effectively while they were working together. The problem was two-fold: the students did not have the necessary pragmatic abilities to communicate properly and they did not know strategies to work collaboratively. The different activities provided to students were based on the contents of the last three units of the course book "American More 4". However, those activities seemed to fail to encourage meaningful, sustained group work with pragmatics. The present study intended to find a solution to the above problem by adapting and modifying the course material in such a fashion that the use of pragmatic expressions and collaborative group work activities were used to a much greater extent. This approach led to the enhanced use of pragmatic expressions and active participation in a collaborative group work style. Therefore, the research aimed at checking how much students would improve their communicative and pragmatic language skills as a result of systematic collaborative group work together with explicit and implicit pragmatic instruction.



2. Aims and Objectives

2.1 Aim

- To improve students' communicative and pragmatic language skills by using collaborative language learning methodology focusing on group work together with explicit and implicit pragmatic instruction.

2.2 Objectives

- To adapt and modify the course book in order to enhance group work in a collaborative manner.
- To implement implicit and explicit pragmatic instruction that support collaborative ways of working between students.
- To determine the improvement in students' pragmatic awareness and collaborative learning during the accomplishment of meaningful tasks.

3. Research Question

Do students improve their communicative and pragmatic language skills as a result of systematic collaborative group work?

The present research project involved both quantitative and qualitative elements which are commonly used in this type of studies according to experts.

4. Delimitation of the Research

It is important to emphasize that through this project, the teacher-researcher mainly intended to assist students to enhance their pragmatic skills by designing a set of meaningful collaborative group work activities that were adapted to the

contents of the sixth, seventh and eighth units of the book *American More 4*. Since this hybrid project was focused on pragmatics and collaborative learning, a set of pragmatic expressions regarding such language functions as agreeing and disagreeing, acknowledging contributions, showing politeness, and giving encouragement were selected to be taught and emphasized explicitly.

The thirty two female Spanish-speaker students were divided equally into control and treatment groups. They were from the eleventh grade (Segundo de Bachillerato BGU in the Ecuadorian educational system) of the “Sagrados Corazones” High School, a private Catholic school in Cuenca, Ecuador. They belonged to a middle socio-economic class and they had a pre-intermediate (A2) English level. Their ages were between (16-18 years old). Both treatment and control groups received 32 hours of instruction during the research between April and June, 2013.

The chapters of this study are as follows: Chapter One is the literature review, which describes the principal concepts related to pragmatics and collaborative learning, including a number of related studies. Chapter Two describes the methodology used for the collection of the data as well as for the application of the activities. In Chapter Three, the results of the study are presented, analyzed, and interpreted. Chapter Four contains the writer’s conclusions and recommendations with the aim that they might be helpful in further classroom practice. Suggestions are also made regarding future studies on pragmatics and collaborative learning in the Ecuadorian context.

Chapter I - Literature Review

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first one reviews the most important definitions related to communication, language learning and Communicative Language Teaching that are relevant to this study. Secondly, L2 pragmatic elements and research studies are going to be analyzed and used as a reference for this study and future research. Thirdly, collaborative language learning aspects will be explained as well as the most relevant studies carried out by different researchers. Another interesting issue in this section is the one related to pragmatics, due to the fact that there do not seem to be enough materials and sources on the market for teachers and students who are interested in L2 pragmatics. Furthermore, the issue related to the difference between the terms *collaboration* vs *cooperation* is highlighted in this study since there are many authors that make no distinction in their use. Therefore, experts in pragmatics and collaborative language learning such as Kasper (2007), Ishihara (2010), Nunan (1992), Johnson & Johnson (2008), among others, will be mentioned in this study. Finally, the issue related to the use of collaborative group work activities will be analyzed in order to draw important conclusions.

1.1 Communication

In order to start this literature review, it is essential to consider the word *communication*, since it is important to know exactly why individuals have the need to communicate effectively. Andrews states that communication is “a social activity involving human beings acting in a collaborative activity”, a theme found in all of the theories (7). Thus, the great importance of communication can be deduced: to be understood correctly by others.



Richards and Schmidt in their book *Language and Communication* emphasize important characteristics that Breen, Candlin, and Morrow stated regarding communication: it

- a) is a form of social interaction, and is therefore normally acquired and used in social interaction;
- b) involves a high degree of unpredictability and creativity in form and message;
- c) takes place in discourse and sociocultural context which provide constraints on appropriate language use and also clues as to correct interpretations of utterances;
- d) is carried out under limiting psychological and other conditions such as memory constraints, fatigue and distractions;
- e) always has a purpose (for example, to establish social relation, to persuade, or to promise);
- f) involves authentic, as opposed to textbooks-contrived language; and
- g) is judged as successful or not on the basis of actual outcomes. (For example, communication could be judged successful in the case of a non-native English speaker who was trying to find the train station in Toronto, uttered “How to train” to a passer-by, and was given directions to the train station.) (qtd. in Richards and Schmidt 21).

All the characteristics mentioned above are immensely important since they are the basis to become effective communicators. In the educational area, both

teachers and learners of a foreign language should try the application of different methodologies and techniques that may include the most important aspects of communication. That is why traditional methodologies based on a grammar focus such as the Grammar-Translation Method were replaced by ones that focus on the goal of developing language functions which refers to the reasons to use language to meet a specific need or desire (Sargent 1). Obviously, there exist different opinions regarding which is the best way of learning and teaching a language. Thus, it is necessary to mention important information regarding language learning.

1.2 Language learning

Arabski and Wojtaszek comment about language learning as “a social psychological process, in which the role of a wider sociocultural context should not be marginalized” (9). Thus, one of the main objectives of a language teacher is to prepare learners to analyze their own communicative needs by taking into account the sociocultural context in which they are immersed. Moreover, when teaching a language, it is essential to consider the age of the learners since this is a factor that will influence the learning process. As the purpose of this study was to work with teenagers, it is necessary to include some reminders mentioned by Brown which focus on the type of learners that were considered in this research, i.e. adolescents:

1. Intellectual capacity adds abstract operational thought around the age of twelve. Therefore, some sophisticated intellectual processing is increasingly possible. Complex problems can be solved with logical thinking. This means that linguistic meta-language can now, theoretically, have some impact. But the success of any intellectual endeavor will be a factor of the attention a learner places on the task; therefore, if a learner is



attending to self, to appearance, to being accepted, to sexual thought, to a weekend party, or whatever the intellectual task at hand may suffer.

2. Attention spans are lengthening as a result of intellectual maturation, but once again, with many diversions present in a teenager's life, those potential attention spans can easily be shortened.
3. Varieties of sensory input are still important, but again increasing capacities for abstraction lessen the essential nature of appealing to all five senses.
4. Factors surrounding ego, self-image, and self-esteem are at their pinnacle. Teens are ultrasensitive to how other perceive their changing physical and emotional selves along with their mental capabilities. One of the most important concerns of the secondary school teacher is to keep self-esteem high by
 - avoiding embarrassment of students at all costs,
 - affirming each person's talents and strengths,
 - allowing mistakes and other error to be accepted,
 - de-emphasizing competition between classmates, and encouraging small-group work where risks can be taken more easily by a teen.
5. Secondary school students are of course becoming increasingly adult like in their ability to make those occasional diversions from the "here and now" nature of immediate communicative context to dwell on a grammar point or vocabulary item. But as in teaching adults, care must be taken not to insult them with stilted language or to bore them with over analysis. (92).

Taking into account the previous information will be helpful for teachers to encourage adolescents to become effective English speakers. Despite the difficulties associated with teaching or learning a language, it is so important to focus attention on the development of the communicative competences as a key goal for communication. Thus, the use of Communicative Language Teaching and its principles are essential to explain what teachers have to do for learners to become competent speakers of a foreign language, in this case the English language.

1.3 Communicative language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become the most popular approach for language teaching since it “has become a generalized ‘umbrella’ term to describe learning sequences which aim to improve students’ ability to communicate” (Harmer 70).

CLT brought the beginning of a paradigm shift in the twentieth century (Richards and Rodgers, 151). The authors mentioned also indicate a set of principles related to CLT that can be used to support a wide variety of classroom procedures, as follows:

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
- Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
- Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
- Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
- Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error.

(172).

CLT implies the detachment of some teachers and students' roles that are brought to and used in the classroom; in particular, those roles are related to the level of responsibility that is assumed by teachers and students. (Lee and VanPatten 2). Through this idea, the notion can be raised of how Ecuadorian contexts are influenced by traditional instruction which makes learners become passive agents in the development of their competences. Hashemnezhad and Sanaz quotes a traditional instruction definition stated by VanPatten as "explanation plus output practices that move learners from mechanical to communicative drills". That is to say, it involves explanation and output practice of a grammatical point and focuses on the manipulation of learner output to affect change in the developing system" (125). It is clear to analyze that there is more to communication than solely using structures and vocabulary correctly. Harmer adds that a fundamental aspect regarding CLT is the way that language is used. Grammar is not the central issue to be considered but the diversity of functions that people can perform with language (69).

Unfortunately, if modern textbooks and resources that are available on the market were analyzed, it would be found that they are not really communicative. For instance, a retired Ecuadorian university teacher from the University of Cuenca, Dolores Burbano, developed a study called "Communicative Competence: Myth or Reality when Learning English as a Foreign Learner" based on the use of an Ecuadorian textbook named "Our World through English". The results showed that teachers and students used the term communicative competence just as a name because grammatical aspects were the central focus in the teaching-learning process, despite the CLT focus of the book.

In CLT, the instructor is not the authoritarian figure in the class, but more a facilitator responsible for arranging opportunities for learners to communicate by using real and meaningful situations in order to achieve the desired goal of CLT: the development of communicative competence (Brown 156).

1.3.1 Communicative competence

David Nunan, in his book titled *Second Language Teaching and Learning* claims that:

“What is it that one needs to know and be able to do in order to speak in another language? Of course, one needs to know how to articulate sounds in a comprehensible manner, one needs an adequate vocabulary, and one needs to have mastery of syntax. These various elements add up to linguistic competence. However, while linguistic competence is necessary, it is not sufficient for someone who wants to communicate competently in another language.” (226)

Some important definitions and purposes concerning the term *communicative competence* were stated by Richards & Rodgers and Littlewood; and quoted in Zhang and Wang:

The ability not only to apply the grammatical rules of a language in order to form grammatically correct sentences but also to know when and where to use these sentences and to whom.

Learning a second language is similarly viewed by proponents of CLT as acquiring the linguistic means to perform different kinds of functions.

“... learners need to acquire a general communicative ability, which will enable them to cope with everyday situations. ... people who want to prepare themselves in a general way, to be able to communicate socially on straightforward everyday matters with people from other countries who come their way, and to be able to get around and lead a reasonably normal life when they visit another country” (111).

Thus, what is meaningful for the goal of this study is the consideration of the needs that L2 learners have in order to develop their communicative competence by taking into account aspects that go beyond a grammatical or lexical focus. Famous researchers such as Nunan and Brown have identified that accuracy and vocabulary are not enough to be a competent communicator; there is the need to learn beyond these aspects to be able to fully transmit a message. As teachers, it is advisable to find ways of doing so in the second language **classroom** where traditional English instruction takes place.

Dick Allwright and his colleagues researched how teachers started to prefer communication over language rules. They were in charge of improving the English level of overseas students but they taught their students in the traditional way- through the study of grammar, vocabulary explanations, organizing paragraphs, and so on. Until one day they started to wonder if what they were doing was actually helping their students improve their English language skills; they realized that indeed this way of teaching was not working well and that it did not “feel right”. Allwright’s hypothesis was that “if the language teacher’s management activities are directed exclusively at involving the learners in solving communication problems in the target language, then language learning will take care of itself” (qtd. in Harmer 52).

With this in mind, the English courses at Essex University changed radically; they were soon giving students tasks such as interviewing people outside the classroom, communication games, and other types of tasks that relied on verbal communication which was now their main focus. According to Jeremy Harmer, Allwright seemed to be suggesting that we learn to do something by doing it, and if the goal of language is communication, then communicating as we learn is the best way to go about it. (53).

1.3.1.1 Components of Communicative Competence

Burbano presents Brown's components of communicative competence as follows:

Grammatical competence: Refers to the knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics and phonology.

Discourse competence: Is the ability to connect sentences appropriately to construct longer stretches of language to make up a coherent whole.

Pragmatic (functional and socio-linguistic) competence: This competence is related to the ability to use and respond to language according to social contexts. Savignon says that this competence “requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the role of the



participants, the information they share, and the functions of the interaction”

Strategic competence: This is the ability or tactics used by the speakers in order to find a way to be understood or to understand a message, perhaps through the use of paraphrasing or repetition. (18-20).

Thus, the different elements that are part of the above communicative competences need to be considered as a whole unit in order to achieve significant results at the moment of evaluating a teaching-learning process. Through a dedicated consideration to aspects such as language use, fluency, authentic language and contexts, and to students' needs, learning a language will become a practice that will be used by learners in different contextualized situations. (Brown 41).

As pragmatics awareness is one of the main issues of this study, the term 'pragmatics', must be explained.

1.4 Pragmatics

Since the term *pragmatics* was presented by Morris in 1938, many researchers have come to study and analyze the different aspects regarding the linguistic phenomena that pragmatics conveys. All those researchers have experimented with different issues that helped them to conclude with definitions that clarify the great importance and value that pragmatics has for the issues that have to do with this study: communication and language teaching and learning. Thus, three significant pragmatic definitions will be mentioned briefly.



According to David Cristal, "Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication" (240). Taking this definition into consideration, it is clear that the message that one person can emit may be understood or not by others, since the expressions used by one person may be influenced by the social rules that belong to the society where that person belongs. Then that expression may not be familiar for the rest of people that interact in that conversation since they can belong to different societies.

George Yule in his book "Pragmatics", defines pragmatics through four areas which may highlight and clarify the importance of this skill. The first being that Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). It has, therefore, more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. Consequently, Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning. The second area is related to the context and how it influences what is being said. It requires a consideration of how speakers organize what they want to say in accordance with who they are talking to, where, when, and under what circumstances. Thus, pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning. In the third area, Yule states the significance of aspects that are not necessarily mentioned in a conversation, but can be interpreted in a clear way as part of what is communicated. We might say that it is the investigation of invisible meaning. Thus, Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said. Finally, Yule explains the notion of distance. Closeness, whether it is physical, social, or conceptual, implies shared experience. On the assumption of how close or distant

the listener is, speakers determine how much needs to be said. Pragmatics is the study of the expression of relative distance (3).

Brian Paltridge provides the following definition of pragmatics:

“Pragmatics is the study of meaning in relation to the context in which a person is speaking or writing. This includes social, situational and textual context. It also includes background knowledge; that is, what people know about each other and about the world. Pragmatics assumes that when people communicate with each other, they normally follow some kind of co-operative principle; that is, they have a shared understanding of how they should co-operate in their communications” (53).

Through the previous definitions, it is intended to demonstrate the need for including pragmatics within the English curriculum so that L2 learners can develop communicative competences in a correct and efficient way. That is, by learning and considering pragmatics as a life skill.

To understand Pragmatics, it is necessary to study how speakers actually use a language, and find out their restraints in social communication. To identify these issues we must first consider Yule's asseveration about the fact that people are a part of social groups which have somehow already established particular rules of behavior that their members follow, perhaps even unconsciously, when having a conversation. However, whenever individuals are faced with a new and unfamiliar group in a new setting they start to feel uneasy because they do not want to say something wrong. For example, when using Spanish (the native language in Ecuador), people from the Coast region may use expressions that are not understandable for people from other regions. Then there may be a

miscommunication among people who are learning Spanish in one city and try to practice what he or she has learned in another city or region. That is why Yule comments about his experience when living in Saudi Arabia as follows: “I had learned some linguistic forms in the language without learning the pragmatics of how those forms are used in a regular pattern by social insiders” (5). That is, even though people are saying grammatically well-formed sentences, they are not using them according to pre-established social standards and thus may not be communicating efficiently.

In Paltridge’s pragmatic definition, the Cooperative Principle was highlighted since it has a great importance when communicating. According to the philosopher, Paul Grice “all speakers, regardless of their cultural background, adhere to a basic principle governing conversation which he termed *The Co-operative Principle*. That is, we assume that in a conversation the participants will co-operate with each other when making their contributions”. (Peccei 26).

The cooperative principle denotes how people use or should manage language in authentic and effective communication. In the following conversation,

A: “Is your sister still using that dress?”

B: Yes. Why do you ask?

A: Well. I think the party is still not over for her!

The following can be analyzed about this conversation:

The latter part of this example where the person A says: “the party is still not over for her” may be interpreted in different ways by someone who does not know the background information. However, the people involved in the conversation do not need extra information to fully understand.

Bublitz and Norrick mention an adaptation of the *maxims* which are general presumptions that guides the course of a conversation. Grice breaks the Co-operative Principle into those maxims in order to make a conversation cooperative.

i The Maxim of Quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true, i.e.

- a) do not say what you believe is false
- b) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

ii. The Maxim of Quantity

Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange (i.e. not more or less informative).

iii The Maxim of Relevance

Make your contributions relevant.

iv. The Maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous, and specifically:

- a) avoid ambiguity
- b) avoid obscurity (468).

Consequently, through the correct application of the maxims and their characteristics, an individual can achieve effective communication.

Another important element of pragmatics, is related to speech acts, which are “a set of circumstances in which people interact in some conventional way to arrive at some outcome” (Yule 57). Through the diverse speech acts, it can be analyzed how one particular sentence could be interpreted in several ways.

An accompanying element of a speech act is the speech event, which Yule describes as the circumstances surrounding the utterance that help both the speaker

and the hearer to recognize the communicative intention (47). He also adds that speech acts also consist of three related acts when producing an utterance.

First, the *locutionary act*, has to do with what is being said and not what is being communicated: the literal significance of a sentence. Yule's example can be used in this part: "I've just made some coffee". Second, an *illocutionary act* can be found inside the sentence as in the previous example. This denotes that there is a purpose or function when pronouncing those utterances. In the case of the above example, the intention of offering or explaining can be deduced. Finally, the *perlocutionary act* is the consequence that the previous acts have. The example used here may be an explanation for the great smell or an offer to drink coffee.

As Yule mentions, speech acts are commonly given more specified labels such as apology, compliment, invitation, promise, or request. Thus, such speech acts are accompanied by a speech event which is a circumstance that surrounds the utterance that help both the speaker and the hearer to recognize the communicative intention (47). H.G Widdowson states that "people may be able to assign semantic meaning to a particular expression as a sentence but be quite unable to make pragmatic sense of it as an utterance, as an instance of language use. Knowing what a sentence means is one thing, but knowing what is meant by an utterance is another." (11).

Through this essential information about pragmatics, teachers, researchers, or someone who is interested in pragmatic issues will be able to relate from theory to practice. For this, the importance of pragmatics in a foreign and L2 (second language) environment must be taken into consideration.



1.4.1 Pragmatics in a foreign and L2 learning setting

In the book, "Teaching and Learning Pragmatics: Where Language and Culture Meet", Ishihara and Cohen emphasize the importance of pragmatics, which is viewed "not only as a cognitive process but also as a social phenomenon. These authors depart from the misleading dichotomy of native versus non-native speakers. They viewed one's pragmatic ability as contextually constructed in interaction, often negotiable in context" (13). That is why Ishihara and Cohen consider social aspects must be highlighted in the learning of second/foreign language (L2) pragmatics, and teachers must consider how a learner's social being relates to the instructional and evaluative practices of the teachers.

Learning English in a foreign language setting cannot have the same effect as learning it in a place where English is considered a second language, and Kasper and Rose seem to agree. They mention Takahashi and Beebe's study that compared Japanese EFL and ESL learners' production of refusals; showing that the ESL learners' refusals were more target-like. They also quote Kitao, who also conducted research of politeness assessments of requests by Japanese EFL and ESL learners. This study showed that ESL learners' judgments converged more with those of native speakers of English (217).

In another study, Kasper and Rose refer to House, who did a study on the effectiveness of instruction on advanced EFL students' pragmatic fluency. He observed that students who enjoyed a longer stay in an English speaking environment outperformed their peers who had not benefited from such exposure both before and after instruction (218).

A different study on the effects of the learning environments for acquiring L2 pragmatics, Kasper and Rose cite Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei who compared EFL students in Hungary with ESL learners at a US university. There the ESL learners identified more pragmatic errors and rated them as more severe than the grammatical errors, whereas the EFL learners recognized more grammatical errors and assessed them as more serious than the pragmatic errors (218).

In 2006, the paper *Developing Pragmatics Competence in a Foreign Language* in the Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal, Yined Tello Rueda mentions Cook who states that foreign language instructional settings are characterized by restricted input and practice due to two facts: first, that the target language tends to be treated as an object of study instead of as a means of socialization and a communication tool; and second, that classroom organization is teacher-fronted (176).

These studies show that the learning environment has a significant effect on the way a language is learnt and which of its aspects are considered more important. It is thus the teacher's job to encourage and show students that English, in this case, goes beyond being another subject in school.

1.4.2 Teaching pragmatics

There are some that say pragmatics cannot be taught and that it comes naturally while learning the L2, while others believe it is fundamental to include it in our teaching practice. For instance, Kasper and Bardovi-Harlig state that "there are significant differences between FL learners and native-speakers with regards to their understanding as well as production of a given speech act. Taking this problem into account, they emphasize the need for teaching pragmatics in both second and



foreign language classrooms" (qtd. in Salemi, Rabbie and Ketabi 188). So, it is necessary to analyze the importance of teaching pragmatics.

In the paper, "Raising the pragmatic awareness of language learners", Eslami-Rasekh, an Assistance Professor at Texas A and M University (2005), mentions some important aspects related to how important is to help learners become pragmatic competent. Furthermore, she discusses different approaches to teach pragmatics based on her experiences and provides strategies that may be applied to raise the pragmatic awareness of English language learners.

The first thing that Eslami-Rasekh points out is Bachman's model, which divides language competence into two areas: 'organizational competence' and 'pragmatic competence'. The first one comprises "knowledge of linguistic units and the rules of joining them together at the levels of sentence ('grammatical competence') and discourse ('textual competence'). Pragmatic competence consists of illocutionary competence, that is knowledge of speech acts and speech functions, and sociolinguistic competence - the ability to use language appropriately according to context" (200).

Eslami-Rasekh, considers that "there is a need for L2 instruction to focus on the pragmatics of the language" (200), since experts and their research have pointed out the positive impact of instructing in order to raise learner's pragmatic awareness. For others, "pragmatic knowledge simply develops alongside lexical and grammatical knowledge, without requiring any pedagogic intervention. However, research into pragmatic competence has demonstrated convincingly that the pragmatics of learners and native speakers (NSs) are quite different" (qtd. in Eslami-Rasekh 200).

By means of the awareness-raising activities that Eslami-Rasekh suggests that for pragmatic development “students acquire information about pragmatic aspects of language—for instance, what strategies are used for apologizing in their first language (L1) and second language (L2), what is considered an offence in their culture compared to the target culture, what are different degrees of offence for different situations in the two languages, and how the nature of the relationship between the participants affects the use of apologies”(200). Then those activities will make learners aware of what to use or not at a specific situation by using the appropriate expressions when communicating with others. Furthermore, learners can establish their own generalizations and set differences between the native and target language speech acts.

The first relevant technique that Eslami-Rasekh suggests to raise the pragmatic awareness of students has to do with “teacher presentation and discussion of research findings on different aspects of pragmatics. In this way, the information provided will help learners build awareness of pragmatic features in both L1 and L2. The second technique is about student-discovery procedure in which students obtain information through observations, questionnaires, and/or interviews” (qtd. in Eslami-Rasekh 201). Through this technique, learners can have a good sense of what to look for in conducting a pragmatic analysis. Also, students become ethnographers and check and record naturally occurring speech acts.

In the article, “The Role of Pragmatics in English Language Teaching”, Nivis Deda analyzes the reasons for teaching pragmatics in language classes. According to her, one of the aims of teaching pragmatics is because it “facilitate the learner’s sense of being able to find socially appropriate language for the situations that they encounter” (Deda). Another goal of teaching pragmatics is “not insist on conformity

to a particular target-language norm, but rather to help learners become familiar with the range of pragmatic devices and practices in the target language". (Deda).

In Gabriele Kasper's paper titled 'Can pragmatic competence be taught?' her first answer to this question is an outright "no". According to her, "competence whether linguistic or pragmatic, is not teachable. Competence is a type of knowledge that learners possess, develop, acquire, use or lose. The challenge for foreign or second language teaching is whether we can arrange learning opportunities in such a way that they benefit the development of pragmatic competence in L2" (Kasper).

Firstly, Kasper asks herself if pragmatics needs to be taught, because she considers pragmatic competence as a requirement to communicate effectively. However, "adopting pragmatic competence as one of the goals for L2 learning does not necessarily imply that pragmatic ability requires any special attention in language teaching because perhaps pragmatic knowledge simply develops alongside lexical and grammatical knowledge, without requiring any pedagogic intervention" (Kasper).

Kasper argues that nonnative adult speakers already have a considerable amount of L2 pragmatic knowledge for free since some pragmatic knowledge such as taking turns at talk is universal and other aspects are transferred from the learners' L1. However, she also contradicts the previous statement by saying that "It is well known from educational psychology that students do not always transfer available knowledge and strategies to new tasks" meaning that they do not always use what they know. So Kasper's suggestion here is that teachers should intend to make learners aware of what they know already and encourage them to use their universal pragmatic knowledge in L2 contexts.

In the same article, Kasper writes about a number of studies that have been conducted to show that speakers know that strategies of communicative actions vary according to context, this according to a study done by Blum – Kulka. Other research carried out by various authors such as Johnston, House, Takahashi, Piirainen-Mash, and Rintell & Mitchell, documented in Kasper's paper, indicate that learners do have knowledge of pragmatics to some extent and are able to differentiate requests, apologies, and politeness said directly or indirectly. Kasper argues that "In their early learning stages, learners may not be able to use such strategies because they have not yet acquired the necessary linguistic means, but when their linguistic knowledge permits it, learners will use the main strategies for requesting without instruction." (Kasper).

In 2005, Brock and Nagasaka, published their article called "Teaching Pragmatics in the EFL Classroom? SURE you can!". Through it, they claim that pragmatic competence needs to be taught despite the fact that some skeptics have said it is not necessary. These authors state that teachers should recognize that despite the fact that a speech act may be "grammatically and phonologically correct, it may be wrong due to the learners' failure to use their pragmatic competence since it is obviously undeveloped. So, it is necessary to emphasize that interlanguage pragmatics considers how pragmatic competence influences L2 learners' speech acts and how pragmatic competence develops in target language learning" (18).

In 2013, Cai and Wang, who are currently lecturers in the College of Foreign Languages in Tangshan Hebei in China, worked on a paper which includes current research on interlanguage pragmatics, which is "the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge" (Kasper, 145). The research selected the studies that focused on the learning process divided in four groups:

cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies, research on pragmatic transfer, and instructed learning of L2 pragmatics.

This is what Cai and Wang can comment about instructed learning of L2 pragmatics:

Research on instructed learning is more practical for modern education.

Apparently, this kind research is mainly studied the input and interaction for pragmatic learning in language classroom. Porter (1986) studied the small group NNS-NNS interaction, and he claimed that the input of socially appropriate expressions of opinions and dis(agreement) were not provided in the class (cited in Kasper & Rose, 1999). Bouton (1994) asserted that pragmatic instruction was generally facilitative and necessary when input was lacking. Furthermore, explicit instruction gained better result than implicit teaching, however, the explicit teaching worked well in raising consciousness, and it couldn't develop some aspects of skill. Eslami-Rasek (2005) argued teachers need to raise learners' pragmatic awareness to facilitate them gaining fluent communication. However, House (1996) reported that conversational responses were the only component of pragmatic fluency that did not improve through consciousness raising and conversational practice. Bialystok (cited in Kasper & Rose, 1999), explained the problem is that fluent and appropriate conversational responses need high degrees of processing control in utterance comprehension and production, and a few occasional exercises in the foreign language classroom are not enough to develop these skills (144).

With this in mind Cai and Wang conclude by saying that after 30 years of ILP (Interlanguage Pragmatics) research, there has been a great development in this

area: however ILP researchers need to extend their range of theoretical orientation to look for more helpful teaching methods in pragmatics.

1.4.3 Explicit instruction in EFL environments

The inclusion of explicit pragmatic instruction in the foreign and second language curricula has been a recommendation that has been made since the late 1980's by researchers like Blum-Kulka and House & Kasper. So, it is necessary to know about the difference between explicit versus implicit instruction.

The term "explicit instruction" means the "knowledge that the learner is consciously aware of, and, is only available in non-time-pressured situations, requires a focus on form, and can be verbalized using metalanguage. Implicit language knowledge is knowledge that is accessible without awareness, in time-pressured situations, when focus is on meaning rather than form, and without the use of metalanguage. (qtd. in Lichtman 94). Both kinds of instruction seem to be similar, but they are not identical. Ellis points out there are different tasks to be used to tap implicit and explicit knowledge. So, it is necessary to analyze that implicit instruction is "delivered spontaneously in an otherwise communication-oriented activity, is unobtrusive, presents target forms in context, makes no use of metalanguage, and encourages free use of the target form. Explicit instruction, on the other hand, is predetermined and planned as the main focus and goal of a teaching activity, is obtrusive, presents the target forms in isolation, uses metalinguistic terminology (e.g., rule explanation), and involves controlled practice of the target form" (qtd. in Lichtman 95).

Brock and Nagasaka draw the following conclusions based on previous research: "even advanced learners of English exhibit significant gaps in L2

pragmatics, and both ESL and EFL learners appear to benefit from explicit instruction in pragmatics (qtd. in Brock & Nebraska 19). That is why they suggest teachers can introduce pragmatics in English by adopting simple acronym S.U.R.E. which will be described in detail as a guide for teachers.

See. Teachers can help their students see the language in context, raise consciousness of the role of pragmatics, and explain the function that pragmatics plays in specific communicative events.

Use. Teachers can develop activities through which students use English in contexts (simulated and real) where they choose how they interact based on their understanding of the situation suggested by the activity.

Review. Teachers should review, reinforce, and recycle the areas of pragmatic competence previously taught.

Experience. Teachers can arrange for their students to experience and observe the role of pragmatics in communication (20-23).

With this in mind, S.U.R.E can be helpful for teachers to create meaningful activities that really enhance pragmatic skills.

According to Ellis, “L2 learners seem to perform better on explicit tasks than implicit tasks, and to master structures more quickly and accurately under explicit than implicit instructional conditions” (143). The studies that were carried out by Ortega, 2001; Spada & Tomita, 2010 are clear examples of how explicit treatments generally cause significantly larger effects than implicit treatments. When doing these explicit treatments, researchers included “rule explanations, attention to particular forms in order to arrive at metalinguistic generalizations by analyzing by themselves, grammar rule explanation, comparisons between the first language (L1) and L2, and metalinguistic feedback” (Lichtman).

In the study that Litchman carried out in 2013, she used both implicit and explicit instruction in order to compare instruction impact performance on tasks tapping implicit knowledge versus tasks tapping explicit knowledge with adolescents and children. The results showed that the adolescent explicit group scored higher on a test of explicit knowledge than a test on implicit knowledge. Also, the idea of comparing children and adolescents groups through the way of instructing them by using explicit and implicit instruction revealed that children performed better on tasks tapping implicit knowledge while adolescents did better on tasks tapping explicit knowledge.

Another study developed by Farrokhi and Atashian (2012) showed that the use of explicit instruction was more efficient in improving the pragmatic performance of sixty Iranian EFL learners than the use of implicit instruction. There were three groups: explicit, implicit, and control that were exposed to conversations from “Spectrum” English books, where refusals stood out. In the treatment group it was intended to raise pragmatic awareness whereas in the control group conversations acted as a source of English comprehension and production.

Another Iranian investigation carried out in 2010 by Dastjerdi and Rezvani from the English Department of the University of Isfahan revealed that the ninety Iranian intermediate EFL learners who received explicit instruction outperformed those in the implicit group, however, there was not a statistically significant difference. There were three groups: explicit, implicit, and control group, who were administered a pre-test to measure their ability to use requests. After the treatment, it could be also analyzed that “both explicit and implicit instructions exerted a significant effect on the learners’ production of requests strategies in English” (782).

A third Iranian study done by Azin Salemi, Mitra Rabiese, and Saeed Ketabi focused attention on the comparison of the effects of implicit versus explicit instruction and feedback in the development of pragmatic competence of intermediate EFL learners of English in terms of the speech act of suggestion. There were 100 participants who were distributed in four experimental groups and one control group. Each of the experimental groups received two twenty-minute successive sessions using different instruction types. Thus, the first experimental group was instructed explicitly and received explicit feedback. The second experimental group received explicit instruction with implicit feedback. Implicit instruction with explicit feedback was used for the third group. Finally, the fourth group received both implicit instruction and feedback. At the end of the treatment, the results revealed that the explicit-explicit method of instruction has a much better influence on EFL learners.

In the study titled, “The effects of input-enhanced instruction on Iranian EFL learners’ production of appropriate and accurate suggestions”, Ghavamnia et al. remark the different results of studies where explicit and implicit instructions were

used. For instance, they mention Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005), who examined the effects of explicit and implicit instruction on learning head acts and downgrades in suggestion. The explicit group received metapragmatic explanation while the implicit group received pragma-linguistic input enhancement and recasts in response to errors. The results of this study showed that there were advantageous effects on the production of suggestions by applying both kinds of instruction (2-3).

Another recent study stated in Ghavamnia et al. was developed by Nguyen, Pham and Pham (2012). Through it, they checked the effectiveness of the two types of instruction on the acquisition of the speech act set of constructive criticism. The explicit group took part in consciousness-raising activities and received explicit metapragmatic explanation and correction of errors, while the implicit group received input enhancement and recasts (3). There was evidence of improvement due to the use of both explicit and implicit instruction.

In 2015, Naoko Taguchi, wrote a paper related to the research and development of instructed pragmatics which focused attention on two main questions: (1) is instruction effective in learning pragmatics?; and (2) what methods are the most effective in learning pragmatics? Taguchi presents a table with clear information about studies that used explicit instruction (Table 1). Through it, Taguchi found “a clear benefit of instruction over non- instructional contexts. Essentially all 31 studies showed significant gains in L2 learners’ knowledge and use of learner pragmatic forms from pre- to post instruction. Evidence proved that in the studies that used a control group, the instructed group outperformed the control group in pragmatic development (11). Nevertheless, research has shown that implicit instruction is just as effective as explicit instruction when using activities that draw learners’ attention to focal pragmatics forms and form-function-context mappings.

For instance, the study developed by Fukuya & Zhang (2002), and Narita (2012). In some cases, an implicit approach can get better results than an explicit one. This is the situation that occurred in Q. Li's study (2012) where findings showed that learners did not need explicit information to show a greater pragmatic improvement.

1.4.4 Creating Pragmatics learning Settings and Materials

Kasper supports the view that teachers must create classroom settings that enable students to be competent in pragmatics by giving them enough opportunities to practice these skills. But now just how many opportunities does a traditional English language classroom offer for developing pragmatics? Kasper presents an already well-known but perhaps controversial fact; she says that in a teacher-centered classroom it is the teacher who does most of the talking, which limits students' opportunities to talk. However, she argues that with teacher talk, students can be provided with the input they need for pragmatic development.

Showing that although classroom talk is authentic, it does not completely encompass interaction that would take place in a real life setting. This means, once again, that classrooms are to be transformed for them to be a place where students will get pragmatic practice; keeping in mind that for most, if not all EFL students, it is the only place where they will have an opportunity to practice the L2.

In order to create a suitable classroom setting and activity for learners to acquire pragmatic competence, the material must be noteworthy. In the paper titled "A comparative study of speech acts in the textbooks by native and non-native speakers: A pragmatics analysis of the New Interchange series vs. locally made EFL textbooks" Rahim Vaezi et.al state that "only through the materials reflecting the

language used by native speakers, language learners can become pragmatically competent in a particular language.” (170).

The same authors also discuss that textbooks play an important role in the students’ learning process since they determine the students’ in class and out of class activities. However, they say, their content is artificial and unauthentic. Grant and Starks (2001) qtd. in Rahim Vaezi et.al suggest the “not only is some of this textbook material out of date, it could also be criticized for not being an accurate reflection of the language that learners hear being spoken outside of the classroom.” (175). With this in mind, the correct way of implementing pragmatics in a class through efficient and meaningful activities must be considered.

Taguchi remarks the creative ways of many researchers to include pragmatics in a classroom. He asserts that there exist a lot of outstanding teachers’ guides, websites, and resource books available nowadays. Some authors are Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor 2003, Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan 2006, Sykes & Cohen 2006, Ishihara & Cohen 2010; Hourck & Tatsuki 2011. Such material offers “a context for pragmatics by illustrating how we can incorporate key elements of pragmatics- social context functional language use, and norms of interaction – into classroom activities and tasks” (2).

According to the research studies above, teaching and learning pragmatics through explicit instruction is advantageous and very practical since it supports learners to gain pragmatic competence effectively.

The present study also highlights the use of collaborative group work activities which may enhance develop pragmatic skills. The reason for using collaborative activities is due to the wish of experimenting with alternative ways of helping learners by creating an environment of cooperation rather than competition.

1.5 Collaborative Language Learning

Collaborative language learning has emerged over the last twenty years as a noteworthy theory within the field of language education. For David Nunan, Collaborative learning “entails students working together to achieve common learning goals, and stands in contrast with competitive learning (3). Despite the fact that this learning model was discovered long ago, people are only now starting to use it in the classroom. So, if someone wants to implement this model, it is necessary to take into account some considerations regarding effective cooperation and teachers’ and students’ roles to allow more active participation in the learning process. (Collazos and Mendoza 61).

For some scholars, the term ‘collaborative’ has the same meaning as ‘cooperative’, as in the book “Techniques & Principles in Language Teaching” written by Diane Larsen-Freeman and Marti Anderson in 2011. However, there are clear distinctions that experts have stated for people to avoid using them inappropriately. So, there is a need to compare what experts have mentioned about the definitions and characteristics of these two terms.

The first term related to ‘collaboration’ is described in the book “Collaborative Learning Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty” (2014) by Elizabeth Barkley, Claire Major, and Patricia Cross. These writers cite the definition stated by Smith and McGregor: ‘collaborative learning’ is the “umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together, in which they are working together in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product” (4). According to Pierre Dillenbourg, author of the book “Collaborative-learning: Cognitive

and Computational Approachers" (1999), the word 'collaboration' has become fashionable, which may be a problem since it can be used improperly. So, he expresses the "broadest definition of 'collaborative learning' which is a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together" (1). Ted Panitz, a Doctor of Education from the United States wrote an article including clear differences between collaboration and cooperation. For him collaboration is a "philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respect of the abilities and contributions of their peers" (1). So, learners have to interact in order to find ways to solve or produce the targeted project or task.

On the other hand, "cooperative learning is an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classrooms." (Richards and Rodgers 8). Another significant definition of Cooperative Learning is the one stated by Olsen and Kagan, "Cooperative Learning is a group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. (qtd. in Richards and Rodgers 8). In this way, learners have specific instructions to do while working with others. For Cohen, Brody, and Sapon-Shevin, authors of the book "Teaching Cooperative learning" (2004), cooperative learning can "allow all students to work together, each student experiencing the role of teacher and or learner, and each student modeling recognition of and respect for many different skills and learning styles" (3).

It is necessary, then, to point out the differences between collaborative and cooperative learning. One significant dissimilarity is related to the "degree of division

of labor among group members. In cooperation, partners split the work, solve sub-tasks individually and then assemble the partial results into the final output. In collaboration, partners do the work ‘together’ to achieve a shared goal (Dillegbourg 8). That means that with the cooperative model each member of a group has individual responsibility, independence, and evaluation for the work that is being done whereas in the collaborative model, all the group members will have the control, interdependence, and responsibility to carry out the tasks or project which will be evaluated. Another difference is that in the cooperative model it is the teacher who is the one who controls the class; while in the collaborative model the group has to take responsibility for the work they are assigned. So, the collaborative teacher can offer recommendations about a group’s work so that each group can determine their final project after consulting the teacher (Panitz 2).

With this in mind, the way collaboration and cooperation relate to and differ from each other can be analyzed. Many scholars have used them interchangeably in their books. The researcher of this project chose to use the term “collaborative” in this study because the activities applied with participants were more open than they usually are when using ‘cooperative’ ones. However, it was also necessary to use the term ‘cooperative’ when it was found textually in literature reviewed.

1.5.1 Principles of Collaborative Learning

Ted Panitz indicates five principles which are the foundation for collaborative learning:

1. Working together results in a greater understanding than would likely have occurred if one had worked independently.



2. Spoken and written interactions contribute to this increased understanding.

3. Opportunity exists to become aware, through classroom experiences of relationships between social interactions and increased understanding.

4. Some elements of this increased understanding are idiosyncratic and unpredictable.

5. Participation is voluntary and must be freely entered into. (13)

1.5.2 Theories Underlying Collaborative Learning.

The theories related to Collaborative Learning come from two developmental psychologists: Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, who “stress the central role of social interaction in learning”. Jean Piaget, one of the most dominant researchers in the area of developmental psychology, was mainly interested in the biological influences on “how we come to know”. For him, each individual is actively involved since the moment of birth in constructing a personal understanding of the world based on the experiences that one may have at different stages of life. (Williams and Burden 21). Thus, in Piaget’s cognitive development theory, he assumes that learning is acquired. Obviously, a key element in learning is the active participation of the learner and not the amount of information that is given to the learner.

Piaget considered two processes which can be used by the individual in order to adapt to the environment from the simplest to the most complex manner: assimilation and accommodation. ” Assimilation is the process of using or transforming the environment so that it can be placed into preexisting cognitive

structures. Accommodation is the process of changing cognitive structures in order to accept something from the environment" (Huit and Hummel 1) 2003. Piaget's theory of cognitive development. *Educational Psychology Interactive*. Valdosta State University. Retrieved Oct 15 2015 from <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/piaget.html>.

These processes help the balance between what is known and what is being experienced. This equilibration is persistently sought in order to attain maturation within which genetics and experience interact (Williams and Burden 22). With this in mind, teachers should realize that learners need to be guided and facilitated with material that help them correct themselves when they make mistakes. In this way, "learning was much more meaningful if the students were allowed to experiment on their own rather than listening to the teacher lecture" (Liang 40). Hence, by considering Piaget's theory of cognitive development, learning a language can improve as a consequence of a continuing progress of intellectual abilities.

A second perspective related to cooperative learning is Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory which was given an extra impetus in the 1990s. Vygotsky was a theorist who claimed that it is necessary "to understand how human social and mental activity is organized through culturally constructed artifacts and social relationships" (qtd. in Mitchell and Myles 194). This theorist was able to foster the Zone of Proximal Development which is "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (qtd. in Eun, Knotek, and Heining-Boynton 133). For him, the best way for the learner to continue learning appropriately requires the assistance of someone else who has a more competent level. In this way,



learning will happen by means of a socially mediated interaction within that learner's zone of proximal development. This concept conveys many suggestions for those who are involved in the educational area. For instance, "authenticity of the environment and the affinity between its participants were essential elements to make learner feel part of this environment. Unfortunately, these elements were rarely present in conventional classrooms" (Liang 27). So, it is necessary to promote such an acceptable social environment in which learners can communicate through valid interactions to gain experience, and thus learning.

The third aspect connected to cooperative/collaborative learning is the holistic constructivist approach which involves concepts from Piaget and Vygotsky that were previously mentioned. For Johnson, Johnson, & Smith (1991), the principles regarding constructivism can be summarized as follows:

First, knowledge is constructed, discovered, and transformed by students. Second, students actively construct their own knowledge. Then students do not passively accept knowledge from the teacher or curriculum. Third, faculty effort is aimed at developing students' competencies and talents". Fourth, education is a personal transaction among students and between the faculty and students as they work together. Fifth, all of the above can only take place within a cooperative context. Sixth, teaching is assumed to be a complex application of theory and research that requires considerable teacher training and continuous refinement of skills and procedures" (qtd. in Patz 1).

Given these points regarding the constructivist perspective, it is necessary to remark that creating a suitable environment in which learners can develop their skills by being active, collaborative, and sociable is a worthy way for learning.

1.5.3 Advantages and disadvantages of Collaborative Learning

Slavin summarizes the advantages of cooperative learning as follows: he says that “we can no longer ignore the potential power of the peer group, perhaps the one remaining free resource for improving schools. We can no longer see the class as 30 or more individuals whose only instructionally useful interactions are with the teacher, where peer interactions are unstructured or off task.”(qtd in Nunan 5). So, it is perfectly valid to consider that collaborative learning could be an appropriate way to improve students’ language proficiency.

Nunan presents some advantages which describe collaborative features that have had an encouraging effect on learners since collaboration help them:

- to learn about learning, to learn better and
- to increase their awareness about language, and about self, and hence about learning;
- develop, as a result, metacommunicative as well as communicative skills;
- to confront, and come to terms with, the conflicts between individuals needs and group needs, both in social, procedural terms as well as linguistics, content terms;
- to realize that content and method are inextricably linked, and
- to recognize the decision-making tasks themselves as genuine communicative activities. (Nunan 3).

On the other hand, there can be some limitations when trying to be successful when using ‘collaborative learning’, which involves “a situation in which particular forms of interaction among people are expected to occur, which would trigger learning mechanisms, but there is no guarantee that the expected interactions will actually occur” (Dillenburgh 5). That is why teachers need to be conscious about preparing the activities in such an appropriate way that they do not get concerned with students’ performance.

One main disadvantage is that despite the fact that teachers organize groups in an organized way, there can be some problems related to the design of situations under specific conditions which mean that teachers may get into trouble when they delegate to students something that is too simple or too difficult for them. In addition, some students can get anxious to finish their work, so they will try to choose the best of the groups instead of dealing with the task in a fair way. Furthermore, when the class has too many students, it may be hard for the teacher to monitor all of them in a short time. For this reason, the teacher needs plenty of time to let students work, analyze information, ask about doubts, receive positive feedback and motivation.

1.5.4 Situations characterized as “collaborative”

To make sure that learners work effectively, it is undeniable to remark some characteristics of a collaborative situation. The features are related to the symmetry of action, knowledge, and status according to Pierre Dillenburgh:

Symmetry of action is the extent to which the same range of actions is allowed to each agent,



Symmetry of knowledge is the extent to which agents possess the same level of knowledge. Actually, symmetry is often confused with heterogeneity: two learners may have a similar degree of expertise but different viewpoints of the task.

Symmetry of status is the extent to which agents have a similar status with respect to their community (7).

1.5.5 Elements of Cooperative Learning

In 1992, Olsen and Kagan set forth some key elements regarding cooperative/collaborative learning. These elements are

- Positive Interdependence
- Group Formation
- Individual Accountability
- Social Skills
- Structuring and structures

The first element to consider in Collaborative Learning is related to positive interdependence, which means the necessity of “working together for a common goal caring about each other’s learning” (Nunan 35). Then each member of the team feels that what support or not to himself/herself can affect or not to all the group. For instance, if the group works on a product such as a story, short presentation, or a project; all the group will have the same score when they are evaluated.

When positive interdependence is clearly understood, it establishes two things: “each group member’s efforts were required and indispensable for group success, and each group member had a unique contribution to make the joint effort because of his or her resources and/or role and task responsibilities” (qtd. in Liang

43). That is why teachers should motivate and explain to each member of a group what he or she has to do in order to complete their work in such a way that they actively contribute to the final product or project. In order to avoid “free riders”, participants who just observe or move around their classmates without doing anything. Thus, the development of the group work can be organized by giving them only a portion of the information or materials that each member needs so that they can analyze, interact and solve their problems by sharing and being responsible for their work, which is going to be joined with others to make a final product or presentation.

The second aspect is related to group formation, which is a meaningful factor in creating positive interdependence. Richards and Rodgers mentioned relevant factors in setting up groups:

- Deciding on the size of the group: This will depend on the tasks they have to carry out, the age of the learners, and time limits of the lesson. Typical group size is from two to four.
- Assigning students to groups: Groups can be teacher-selected, random, or student-selected, although teacher-selected is recommended as the usual mode so as to create groups that are heterogeneous on such variables as past achievement, ethnicity, or sex.
- Student roles in groups. Each group member has a specific role to play in a group, such as noise monitor, turn-taker monitor, recorder, or summarizer.

With this organization, students will be able to establish ways to work together effectively, and ensure equal participation of the members.

The third element has to do with individual accountability which involves “the responsibility that every team member feels in charge of their own and their

teammates' learning and makes an active contribution to the group. Thus, there is no 'hitchhiking' or 'freeloading' for anyone in a team – everyone pulls their weight" (qtd. in Nunan 35). In this context, hitchhiking and freeloading mean that an individual wants to get a free grade without making any effort. To be fair enough with each group's performance, it is necessary that the teacher tries to assess each member in some part of the development of their tasks, so that each member has to be competent enough to show what he or she was assigned.

Social skills are the next element that has to be taken into account because thanks to the development of those skills, students will interact with each other as teammates. That is why explicit teaching of social skills must be done in order to ensure successful interaction. Schultz states that social skills are necessary "not only in terms of cooperation but also without hostility and without the teacher's authority so that each student can be motivated internally by need for freedom, love, and fun" (qtd. in Liang 34). Thus, letting students solve their problems under some regulations and developing skills like leadership, decision making, trust building, communication, and conflict-management can really help student success not only in the classroom, but in other real life situations.

The last but not least element to be mentioned has to do with the structuring and structures which refer to ways of organizing student interaction. Through the application of this element, "teams assess what they have learned, how well they are working together, and how they might do better as a learning team" (Nunan 35). Thus, teachers may get some information about what learners think about working in their groups, or give some feedback about how well their performance is.

1.5.6 Research findings in Collaborative Learning

Research in second language acquisition aims at finding the most beneficial tasks to acquire a language through which learners are required to negotiate meaning among themselves to complete an interactive task. This indicates that teachers need to have students working together, which will eventually help both teachers and learners achieve their language goals. That is why some studies as examples associated with collaborative learning in an EFL context are going to be mentioned. There is an extensive list of works which show the undoubtedly advantageous way of learning by using collaborative activities to develop learners' skills.

Firstly, it is relevant to mention that the first reviews about the use of collaborative learning started in the early 1970s by Johnson and Johnson (1974) and Slavin (1977). Also, it is somewhat old but valid to mention the studies carried out on collaborative learning by Good and Brophy in 1987. To that date, they reported 41 studies related to collaborative learning with positive results. From those studies, however, 14 were not considered significant because they were small-scale and conducted over a limited period of time and only one reflected good results thanks to the motivation and the appropriate training and support of teacher. In 1987, Steven, Madden, Slavin and Farnish also came to the conclusion that learners working in cooperative groups significantly outperformed those receiving traditional instruction. This is also supported by another study carried out by Stevens, Slavin and Farnish in 1997, in which learners performed better on writing and speaking activities by using collaborative activities.

In 2005, Trena M. Paulus, of the University of Tennessee, USA, investigated the use of collaborative dialogue for new knowledge construction. Through this study, it was proved that students chose to cooperate rather than collaborate while working

in their groups in an online version. This means that students preferred to divide the assignment to be worked individually and later they joined it to make a final version of their work. Something similar happened in Harthorn and Ingram's study (2002) and Paulus (2004). This reference seemed to reflect that "putting students in groups does not automatically result in collaborative interactions, but providing guidelines for groups can increase the likelihood of collaboration" (Paulus113).

In 2009, Noreen M. Webb, from the Department of Education of the University of California, Los Angeles, California, USA, focused great attention on the role of teachers in fostering effective collaborative group work behaviors by preparing students for collaborative work, forming groups, structuring the group-work task, and influencing student interaction through teachers' discourse with small groups and with the whole class.

In Webb's paper, the valuable research that was carried out until 2009 is highlighted, and which is imperative to cite since it included the use of collaborative work. According to Webb's review, the use of group work in class continues to show positive results in students' achievement around the world. Studies like the ones done by O'Donnell in 2006 and Slavin in 1995 recognize that students work better when interacting with others. These researchers emphasize the idea that simply placing students in small groups does not guarantee that they will be learning together. Instead, students' learning success depends on "the nature of the students' participation in group work. In particular, such benefits derive from the quality and depth of students' discussion, such as the extent to which students give and receive help, share knowledge, build on each other's ideas and justify their own and other students' perspectives" (qtd. in Webb 2). In addition, Webb mentions Chi's work from

2000, where students' processes of formulating an explanation is focused on since it helped them to internalize principles, and to construct specific inference rules for solving a problem or repair imperfect mental models. Other ideas similar to Chi's are shown in O'Donell, & Jinks, 2000; Fuchs et al, 1997; Howe et al 2007; Howe & Tolmie 2003.

On the other hand, Webb also cites Barron (2003) who identified negative aspects related to collaborative group work. Those aspects are connected with the lack of coordination among group members' efforts and participation as an impediment to group functioning and to individual learning. The lack of attention when giving or asking for suggestions when working together is another problem that is explained in Kumpulainen and Kaartinen (2004). In addition to that, there is evidence of the use of negative socio-emotional processes through the use of rudeness, insults, and off-task behavior, while working with someone that does not fit in the group or when there is a dominant member (qtd. in Webb 5). Finally, in Ross & Cousins (1995) and Ross (2008) the incorrect, incomplete, and sometimes incoherent explanations that students use while interacting are mentioned. That is why Webb considers that teachers need to prevent students from using those negative processes by assuming a responsible role when working with collaborative work.

For Webb, preparing students for collaborative work deals with different skills in diverse areas such as taking turns in speaking, engaging in active listening, asking and answering questions, making and asking for suggestions, expressing and requesting ideas and opinion, brainstorming suggestions, ideas and opinions, giving and asking for help, giving and asking for explanations, explaining and evaluating ideas, arguing and counter-arguing, using persuasive talk, and

summarizing conversations. To achieve that, some studies have been developed which were helpful in promoting communication skills such as SPRinG (Social Pedagogic Research into Group work) or improving classrooms designs to promote effective collaborative activities, for instance, the program developed by Baines et al. (2008; see also Baines, Blatchford & Chowne, 2007; Blatchford, Baines, Rubie-Davies, Bassett & Chowne, 2006). Baines et al.'s (2008) teachers' handbook presents a great deal of ideas which promote effective group work activities. Other studies that were done by Guillies in 2003 and 2004 provide ideas to train students so that they can actively listen to each other, provide constructive feedback for each other's suggestions and ideas, encourage all group member to contribute to the group task, understand other group members' perspectives, and monitor and evaluate the progress of the group.

In order to avoid high status students (who are generally active, popular, extroverted and high-achievers) from influencing or marginalizing low achievers (introverted and passive learners) in a negative way while interacting, Cohen and Lotan (1995) developed two status interventions based on broadening the notions of status and student competence. With this, students understand that there is no student who can do all the tasks individually and egocentrically. Cohen and Lotan also indicate how teachers might observe students carefully so as to encourage the groups that are behaving and collaborating in the correct way.

Some relevant ideas related to encouraging the participation of all group members have to do with the type of tasks that teachers set for students. For example, in a series of studies realized by Cohen (1994); Chizhik (2001); Chizhik and Goodman (2003), two groups were compared by taking into account that each

of them were asked to work with either open-ended tasks or structured tasks. The results showed that differences in participation rates between high-status and low-status group members were really small. This indicates that if teachers apply well-structured tasks, there will not be a risk of missing the collaboration of all the members of the group. For that reason, collaborative learning activities can include collaborative writing, group projects, joint problem solving, debates, study teams, and other activities.

With the examples described above, it is undeniable to validate the advantages of using collaborative learning in the classroom by taking into account that students need to socialize with others to learn not only knowledge, but overcome real life situations that may occur when interacting with others.



Chapter II - Research Methodology

1. Overview

In this chapter, the methodology which was applied in this project is explained as well as the description of the participants involved, the instruments used to collect data, and the procedures followed to conclude the investigation.

It is worth mentioning that both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data. The quantitative method was applied with the graded tests results. Qualitative methods of data gathering like observation were used during the development of the collaborative group work activities and a final interview at the end of the sessions was convenient to handle information and analyze it.

It was appropriate to use qualitative methods in this study since they include “a focus on discovering and understanding the experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of participants through various strategies of inquiry” (Harwell, 149). In qualitative inquiry, the researcher does not try to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon (Creswell 213). Due to the subjective nature of inferring qualitative data, Mildred L. Patten emphasizes the limitation of the generalizability of the results and the conclusions arrived at (19).

By carrying out this study, the research/teacher seeks to answer the question: Do students improve their communicative and pragmatic language skills as a result of systematic collaborative group work?

2. Participants

2.1 School

This research study was carried out in the Unidad Educativa Bilingüe “Sagrados Corazones”, which is a prestigious private Catholic institution. The subjects that participated in the research study belonged to the 2do de Bachillerato General Unificado (2do BGU), (3rd level of the American high school system), parallels A, and C.

The school is developing a Cambridge project, which looks for the students' English skills improvement according to their current English level. Through this, students are required to graduate with a B1.2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages (33). The participants of this project started their school year with an A2.1 level according to the Cambridge placement test which was applied by some representatives of Cambridge University. In this way, students of one class of about 34 were subdivided into two groups. The first group was formed by students who got the highest grades in that test. (from 8-10). The rest of the student had to be part of the second group.

2.2 Students

After students were divided into the two groups: intermediate and beginners, I was assigned to work with the parallels A and C of the eleventh grade (intermediate students). Then, the two intact classes of students were asked to take part in the research study. An informed consent was signed by their parents or legal representatives in order to obtain their authorization for their participation (Annex 1). The ethical aspect of considering the legal age of participants was taken into account appropriately. Obviously, the researcher sent a written letter to the Lcda. Ruth Elizabeth Narea Tenesaca

authorities of the institution to ask for the corresponding permission. The request was kindly accepted and supported by the institution without any inconvenience. (Annex 2). In this way, the legal procedure was developed before starting with the treatment.

Both groups included 32 female students. They were between sixteen to eighteen years old. They were all students who had been studying English for eleven years (5 hours a week) and had similar levels of language proficiency. The first group of 16 students (control group) worked with the ordinary course book “American More! 4” and syllabus used according to the English level of students. The second group (experimental group) constituted the main focus of the research. They were intact classes which means that “the participants cannot be randomly assigned to one of the experimental or control groups” (Mackey and Gass 142).

2.3 Time

The participants attended eight hours of English classes a week. Each period of class lasted 60 minutes. Thanks to the organization and permission of the authorities and parents, it was possible to develop the project for five hours per week over seven weeks from the last week of April, through May and June 2013. The treatment took about 32 hours of instruction. The time that teacher-researcher used to prepare the pre-test, post-test, lesson plans, materials arrangement, is not included in the thirty-five hours.



3 Materials

In this section, a complete and detailed description of the materials used to conduct this study will be given.

3.1 Course Books

As the school adopted a bilingual program offered by Cambridge University Press in 2012, students were assigned the course book called “American More 4” from Cambridge editions. This book had eight units to be developed during the school year. For the objectives of the research study, it was planned to work with the topics of units 7 and 8. Unit 7 was titled: *I didn't use to like them*. The name of unit 8 was *Natural disasters*. The style of the book did not include collaborative group work activities, but it presented a few pragmatic expressions related to ways of expressing agreement, disagreement, and sympathy. That was why the main goal of this project focused attention on working with collaborative group work activities which can enhance pragmatic skills. The issues selected to design those activities were based on the topics and subtopics of units 7 and 8. Those were: music, musical instruments, inventions, and natural disasters. There were also two additional topics that were added to the project: touristic places, and teen's life.

3.2 Informed Consent

This request was authorized by the school principal when it was delivered. Later, another informed consent was sent to the participants' parents or legal guardians. That was how permission to carry out the project was obtained.



3.3 Rules for Collaborative Work

It was necessary to establish some important rules so that participants knew what they had or did not have to do while working in their collaborative groups. In this way, the teacher-researcher analyzed the information and gave them a list of rules in order to be understood to avoid inconveniences during the development of teaching the collaborative group. (See Annex 3).

3.4 Anecdotal Observation Record

The Anecdotal Observation Record was used by the teacher-researcher to keep evidence of participants' behavior while they were working in groups. (See Annex 4). This sheet was adapted from an anecdotal observation record created by an American public school called Central Park East Secondary School. Through it, the teacher-researcher could keep notes about participants' interaction, collaboration, engagement and use of time.

3.5 Pre-test/ Post-test

A written test was used to assess the participants' pragmatic skills before and after the treatment of this research. In this test, the participants' pragmatic awareness before and after explicit instruction was evaluated by using a set of expressions which included the following language functions: agreeing and disagreeing, acknowledging contributions, showing politeness with others and giving encouragement when completing tasks. The participants took this test individually. Both pre-test and post-test were scored over thirty-five points and both were designed with different types of questions like matching, rating expressions,

classifying, completing, and ordering ideas. The design of both tests were checked by the teacher-researcher's tutor (Annex 5-6).

3.6 Lesson Plans

The teacher-researcher developed her activities by using one lesson plan for each topic that was worked with. There were six topics. The format of the lesson plan was the one used by the English area of the institution. There is a lesson sample included (Annex 7).

3.7 Worksheets

Worksheets were designed for students so that they could have clear instructions of the activities they had to do when working in groups. There are three samples included (See Annex 8).

3.8 Pragmatic expressions list

In order to let students choose the vocabulary they would need when communicating while working with others, a list with pragmatic expressions was provided (Annex 9).

4. Procedure

As was proposed, the research project application began in April and continued to June of the school year 2012-2013 during 5 hours a week.

After getting the corresponding authorization to carry out the project by sending the written request to the school principal, students received a piece of

paper with an informed consent on it. They had to socialize that document with their parents so that they could give back a written signed authorization.

At the beginning of the next session, the researcher-teacher gave the participants a demographic questionnaire which was filled in anonymously. After that, students were motivated and the importance of working in groups to learn better explained. Through that, the teacher-researcher wanted to make participants conscious of how they had to participate actively while working with others. They were told that they were going to be evaluated by taking into account aspects regarding collaboration, interaction and engagement at the end of each topic, individually or in groups.

When the next session started, participants could see how the class was arranged. The desks and chairs were distributed in such a way that four groups could have a specific place to work. Desks were set with a specific color: yellow, blue, green and pink. Participants were divided according to the teacher-researcher's criteria in order to promote collaboration among students. The criteria that the teacher-researcher considered were based on the participants' attitudes when working in class. Those attitudes were evidenced during the first months of class of the school year. The teacher-researcher was able to see that some students did not care about collaborating, interacting and socializing and working with others because they had their close friends whom they paid the complete attention to in class. For that reason, the teacher- researcher planned how the participants would make groups.

When participants got together in their groups, they received a set of materials to use. It included markers, pencils, erasers, cardboard, a pair of scissors and some

glue. Then they were asked to read some relevant rules for class activities that would help them work properly. They had plenty of time to analyze the content of those rules and paraphrase the content of each rule to be shared with the whole group. The aspects included in the rules considered the appropriate use of time to complete the activities by dividing the work to do in a fair way among members. In addition, responsible attitudes, active participation, and mutual collaboration was emphasized in the rules for each activity. After that, the students were asked to think about four advantages or disadvantages of working in groups in classes in order to socialize and discuss their ideas with others. After ten minutes, each member of the groups exposed their ideas to the class. The teacher motivated them to show respect when somebody was talking. Students could help each other while working together. At the end of this activity, the teacher emphasized attention on the idea of using pragmatic expressions that they would use to encourage or acknowledge someone appropriately.

To analyze how much participants knew about the use of pragmatic expressions, the next research instrument was applied with the group. It was a pragmatic test which quizzed them about the following aspects: ranking pragmatic expressions which shows agreement and disagreement; scaling a set of terms from the most polite the most impolite, classifying expressions of praise and encouragement related to problem solving, creativity, and achievement. It took about an hour to complete the test.

At the beginning of each session, the teacher-researcher emphasized the appropriate way to collaborate, behave, and socialize when working with others in order to obtain not only good individual and group assessments but to improve social

skills among participants, since they had the responsibility to set roles for each member of their group by taking into account their abilities.

During the next session participants were welcomed and motivated to participate in the activities planned for the first topic, which was about musical instruments. So, the first thing they did as a warm-up activity was to think about a name and a logo for their group. The objective of that activity was to motivate students to work collaboratively to produce a drawing and a name that could identify them. After that, they could share their logos and names with the rest of the groups so that they could be identified during the rest of the sessions. The following activity was to listen to different musical instrument sounds. Then they had to recognize the name of the instrument to be written on a piece of paper with big letters. They only had fifteen seconds to write the name of each musical instrument. At the end, the group with more points was the winner and they received some candy as an incentive for their participation.

The following activity to be developed by participants was the identification of unusual musical instruments with their corresponding pictures. The objective of the activity was to match information and pictures by deducing or guessing. A limit of twenty minutes was established before the activity started. Thus, students had to collaborate by controlling the time in order to finish the activity on time. To continue, a set of cards was given in an envelope to each group. The teacher explained to them what they had to do before starting. They had to match cards and their names. The cards had to be arranged in alphabetical order so that the groups could check the answers quickly at the end of the activity. While working with the activities, students were observed by the teacher-researcher. Notes were taken to analyze

important information later. The most important aspect of that activity was the way they helped each other to finish the activity by using only English as a special requirement. At the end of this activity, the teacher checked their answers with them so as to see how well they had performed the activity.

The following activity was related to the collaborative technique called Think-Pair Share in which “learners analyze an issue or problem individually for a few minutes and later explain their ideas to a partner after which they may join another pair to discuss their views on the topic” (Barkle, Major, and Cross 152). In this activity, a piece of information with true and false information of an unusual musical instrument was given to each participant. The information regarded the history, origin or characteristics of different unusual musical instruments. After that, each participant explained to his group what he or she had understood. Then participants had to make decisions about what statements were true or false in their groups.

In the next class, each group was evaluated and received some feedback related to the Think-Pair-Share activity. Participants could also check their ideas with all the class. While participants were participating orally one by one, the teacher was controlling the attention of those who were distracted or giggling. Thus, students realized they had to be responsible enough to give clear ideas to be able to help each other. For that reason, students started concentrating and getting along with each other because they knew they needed everyone’s ideas and collaboration.

The next activity had to do with brainstorming vocabulary that participants could remember about musical instruments. They only had five minutes to make a list of words to be checked by another group. Spelling was important to be

considered in this task. Participants could review their mistakes at the end of it. The winners of the activity got some incentives for their participation.

The final session that was connected with the topic of musical instruments was explained clearly to participants. It was a project activity that was planned to be developed in thirty minutes. The principal aim of the activity was to let students organize themselves in such a way as to invent the design of a musical instrument by using prior sessions' ideas. The participants also had to use their creativity to choose an original name for the project. Obviously, they had to present their final product with the explanation of its origin, history and characteristics. The evaluation was carried out by the teacher taking into account the engagement, interaction, and collaboration of all the members of the group.

For the next sessions, the researcher planned a similar format as the activities developed during first topic. They included a warm-up activity at the beginning of each session. Later, groups had different activities to work on with their group members. At the end of each topic, the teacher-researcher evaluated the students. The activities were developed by using a lesson plan for each of the following topics: music, natural disasters, famous inventions, touristic places, and teen's life.

For the development of the second topic, the teacher started with a warm-up activity in which participants had to listen to the tunes of some songs and sing the lyrics of those songs for 15 seconds. Groups had to respect the turn of the person who asked to participate first. Winners got incentives for their performance. Later, students were told that they had to check the rules for participating in groups to remember what they had to do to achieve efficient performance of each group. Then participants received clear instructions to participate in an activity created by the

teacher-researcher and called “Share 4 fifty seconds”. To develop the activity, they received an envelope with different cards with different topics written in each of them. The objective was to concentrate on talking about different topics related to music for a specific amount of time (fifty seconds). This activity was challenging for them because if they stopped talking, they could not get a point.

After that, participants worked in groups with some texts that were distributed to all the members of each group under participants’ responsibility. So, students read the texts individually to be summarized and analyzed by each group trying to guess which of them were true or false. As a final part of this activity, students had to check the answer of another group in order to compare it with their own ideas. Finally, the teacher explained to them the correct answers to be compared with all the class. As a final project for this topic, participants were asked to bring information to class about traditional music in Ecuador so that each group could choose one type of music to summarize information and explain its origin, history, importance, and influence on people to the class. In this way, students organized their work to be presented in the next session.

Before starting with the third topic, the teacher-researcher gave instructions about the implementation of a pragmatic expression list which included convenient vocabulary to be checked and practiced during the activities. Then students received explicit instruction about those expressions. In other words, the teacher-researcher explained how, when and why to use each of those pragmatic expressions. They were motivated to use them during the development of the collaborative group works from that time on.



During the development of the third topic, participants knew how they had to collaborate to work in groups by using the pragmatic expressions with others. During the warm-up activity, students played a game called “hurricane”, in which they had to make groups of people according to the description that was mentioned by the teacher-researcher. When participants could not get a group, they were out of the game. The next activity was related to the matching of cards according to the correct definition for different natural disasters. The objective of that activity was to create a mini poster with those definitions, drawings and examples of natural disasters. Students had to socialize the posters at the end. The teacher-researcher observed and emphasized the use of English and pragmatic expressions. During the next activity, students were given a list of names of hurricanes and volcanos with different years when they produced terrible disasters. Participants had to put them in chronological order by checking some information from that provided. They had to organize the ideas based on their opinions. At the end, they checked their answers with other groups' answers. Finally, the last activity of the topic was the creation of a big poster where they had to describe a natural disaster that was relevant to Ecuador. They were provided with relevant information to be analyzed and summarized. During the activity, the students were observed to be evaluated by taking into account their collaboration and interaction. They were also motivated to use the pragmatic list to communicate properly.

In the next session, participants were going to work with the fourth topic related to inventions. For this topic, it was planned to work with a warm-up activity where participants had to use toilet paper to invent a mime that could be used for a chore by teenagers. They had to use their own bodies to do that. When they finished, all the members of the groups had to participate orally and collaboratively.

The following activity was related to the analysis of different bizarre inventions which were created in Japan. Students had to give an opinion about those inventions in each group. They were motivated to respect and encourage their partners' opinions.

The following activity was about the analysis of the different names and ingredients of four sauces served with salty snacks. Participants tried those sauces and wrote down their answers to be compared with other groups' answers. Following that, the teacher checked their answers with all the class and asked them to think about a recipe that had to be invented by them in order to prepare and share them the following class.

After students organized their ideas and roles to prepare their invented recipe, they prepared the recipe and a name for it. Then students were asked to evaluate another group's performance by using a rubric. Students were also observed and evaluated by the teacher-researcher while they were describing their project. Finally, they were asked to write down their feelings about the development of that project.

The fifth topic was developed by participants in the following session. It was about touristic places. The class started with an activity called Round Robin. The objective of this technique was to brainstorm ideas generated by asking different questions to different members of the groups within a specific time limit (Barkley, Major and Cross 159). Then students prepared 10 questions to be asked in their groups. The questions were related to different touristic places. After that activity, everyone was able to participate in an equal way. Later, participants had to match cards with different words to make sentences related to the touristic places. Each group has different cards to use. In this way, participants were motivated to complete the task as soon as they could so that they could receive incentives for their



participation. As a final activity on the topic, participants worked on a role-play activity in which students had different roles in a short conversation that was created by students by using the cues that were given. Each group made a short presentation by using some costumes. Groups were evaluated through the rubric used by the teacher-researcher.

The last topic to be worked on by the participants was about teens' life. As a preliminary activity, students participated in groups in a technique called "Talking Chips" where participants discussed a controversial topic and used a "token" (a paper clip, or small object) each time they had to talk so that every participant had the same number of interventions (Barkley, Major, and Cross 170). Through this activity, participants had to respect turns and use pragmatic expressions freely. In the following activity, the teacher used a movie called "Philadelphia", a drama which was produced in 1993 and directed by Jonathan Demme. The argument of the movie was used as a source of discussion. Participants needed to collect a list of unknown vocabulary while they were watching the movie. When the movie was over, the participants made a unique list of 20 words in each group. Participants socialized their words and their definitions. They also included a sentence as an example to be explained clearly by all the class. After socializing the vocabulary, participants had to take a group quiz in which they described definitions of the vocabulary related to the movie. Also, they had to answer some questions related to the plot of the movie. The next activity was a critical debate in which participants had to assume and argue a side of an issue which is against their personal views. There were two topics: telling the truth versus white lies and discrimination. As a final project, participants had to organize a trial by using ideas of the movie "Philadelphia". The roles of the members of the trial was assigned through a raffle. Their roles included prosecution lawyers,

prosecution witnesses, prosecution clerk, defense lawyers, defense witnesses, defense clerk, jury, and the judge. In this way, each person was in charge of assuming one position during the trial which was observed and evaluated by the teacher/researcher.

After working with the different collaborative activities, the teacher-researcher assessed participants' pragmatic skills by using a post-test which included questions to complete, match, and rank expressions from the most formal to the informal ones, among others. Finally, students were interviewed to receive feedback about the use of collaborative group work.

Before analyzing the data collected for this research, it is necessary to summarize the instruments used in this project. There was a pre-test and a post-test which was used to check how much participants improved their pragmatic skills. Furthermore, observations of the teacher-researcher were done by using a collaboration rubric at the end of each topic. Finally, students' perceptions of the method applied were included.

Chapter III- Data Description, Analysis, and Discussion

1. Overview

In this chapter, a complete report of the data obtained during the pre-test, the treatment and the post-test will be analyzed. Moreover, a discussion and interpretation of all the data will be included. The research instruments are in the annexes. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately.

2. Quantitative Data

The first aspect to be analyzed was the one related to the participants' pragmatic performance before and after the treatment. In order to apply the corresponding analysis of both treatment and control group in a quantitative way, the results of the pre-test and post-tests were compared. The highest grade that participants could get in these tests were 35 points.

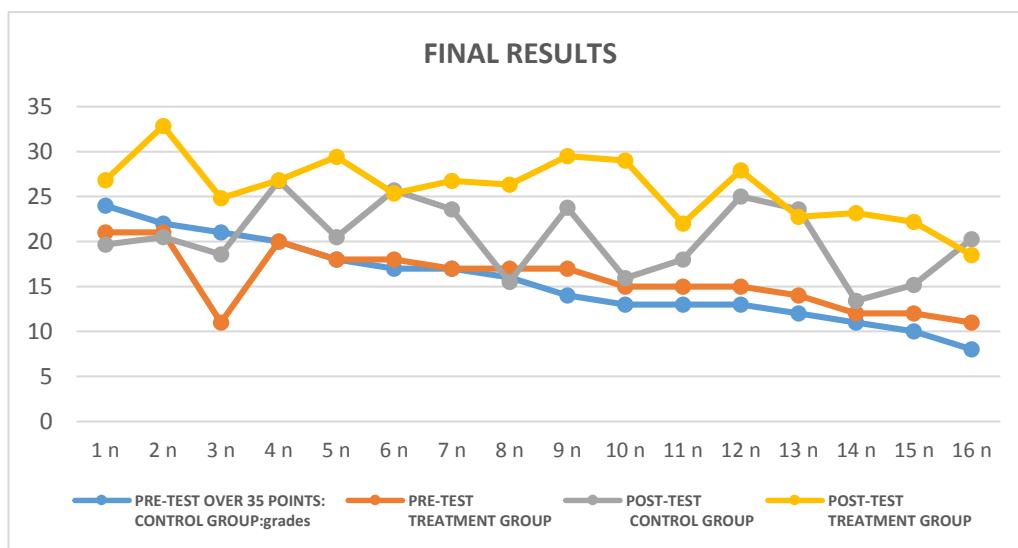


Fig. 1 Source: Final results: pre-test/ post-test control group and treatment group.

As can be seen, there is clear evidence of improvement in grades in the treatment group when comparing the pre-test and the post-test. It is necessary to remark that all students from treatment and control group started with a similar English level (A2). Through this graphic, the way the control group also improved their pragmatic competence in the post-test can be seen but the improvement was not as much as the treatment group.

To continue analyzing the results of the pre-tests and post-test, the researcher attempted to determine the descriptive statistical values, such as the calculation of the mean, the variances and standard deviations. In that way, it was possible to perform the corresponding analysis. Furthermore, statistical inference studies were applied for the behavior of the population, through the confidence range calculation. Thus, the “t” student test was applied in order to show the inequality of the population averages. To reinforce the average calculation, the “F” Fisher test was applied to show the inequality of the variances. As an added value of the study, the following graphics will clarify the results.

2.1 Average calculations

The pre-test and post-test media calculation was gotten through the following: all the grades were summed up and divided for the number of the sample (the number of participants)



$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{n}$$

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\text{Addition of all the observed values in the sample}}{\text{Number of values of the sample}}$$

Elements included in the formula :

\bar{X} : is the average of the sample; it is read: X bar

n : number of values of the sample

X: represents each particular value

Σ : is the Greek capital letter sigma and points out the addition operation

$\sum X$: is the addition of X values of the sample

The total sum of each of the results of the two groups: control group and treatment group, both of the pre-test and the post-test is divided by the number of observations.

2.2 Calculations of Variances

Through the following formula, the calculation of variances is obtained of each of the results regarding the average value.

Elements of the formula

s^2 : is the sampling variance

X: represents each particular value

\bar{X} : is the average of the sample; it is read: X bar

n : number of values of the sample

Σ : is the Greek capital letter sigma and points out the addition operation

STANDARD DEVIATION OF THE SAMPLE

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (X - \bar{X})^2}{n-1}}$$

The total sum of the squares of the results of each group both of the pre-test and post-test less the averages of both pre-test and post-test is divided by the number of observations minus 1.

2.2.1 Results

	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST	
	CONTROL GROUP	TREATMENT GROUP	CONTROL GROUP	TREATMENT GROUP
Average	15.56	15.88	20.36	25.89
Variance	21.06	11.05	16.71	12.83

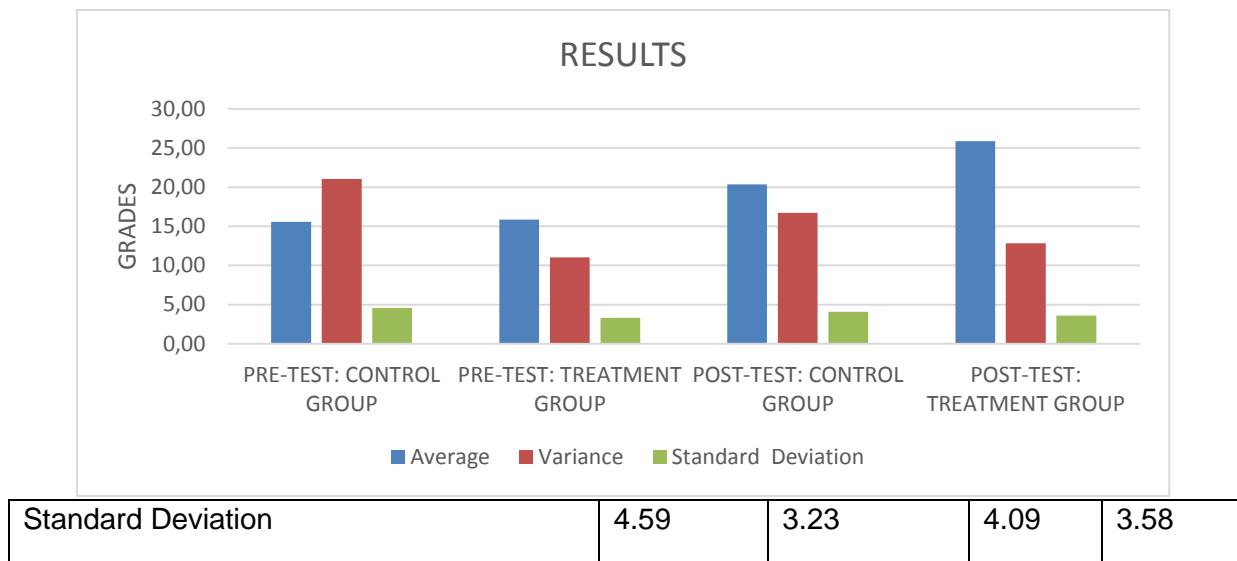


Fig. 2 Source: Results: Average, Variance and Standard deviation.

Typically, the analysis of variance is used to associate a possibility of concluding that the average of a group of grades is different to the average of another group grades.

2.3 Confidence Range Calculation

With the objective of validating the statistical processes mentioned before, a Confidence Range calculation was carried out whose purpose was to estimate the difference of the populations averages.

Confidence Range has to do with the estimation of the average difference of two populations with unknown standard population deviation.

$$I.C \text{ to estimate } \mu_d = \bar{d} \pm t_{\alpha/2, n-1} \frac{S_d}{\sqrt{n}}$$

Where: $\mu_d = \mu_x - \mu_y$

μ_x : Pre-test Population average

μ_y : Post-test Population average

n = number of paired observations = 16

$(X_1, Y_1), (X_2, Y_2), \dots, (X_n, Y_n)$, extracted of population with averages μ_x and μ_y .

\bar{d} = Average of the distribution of observational samples differences

$$\bar{d} = \frac{\sum(X_i - Y_i)}{n} = \frac{\sum di}{n}$$

S_d = Standard deviations of the distribution of observational samples differences

$$S_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(di - \bar{d})^2}{n-1}}$$

$t_{\alpha/2, n-1}$ = "t" value, of the distribution "t" student test with "n-1" degrees of freedom

$\alpha/2 = 0.025$

2.3.1 Results of the Control Group

$$\bar{d} = \frac{\sum(X_i - Y_i)}{n} = \frac{\sum di}{n} = -4.80$$

$$S_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(di - \bar{d})^2}{n-1}} = 5.28$$

Confidence Range to estimate

Upper limit = -1.99

Lower limit = -7.61

In conclusion, there exists a confidence range between a lower limit of 7.61 and an upper limit of 1.99. Therefore, for methodological interventions in future populations with the same characteristics of a control group, the post-test

performance will be increased to the performance of the pre-test in an interval of 1.99 to 7.61

2.3.2 Results of the treatment group

$$\bar{d} = \frac{\sum(Xi - Yi)}{n} = \frac{\sum di}{n} = -10.01$$

$$Sd = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(di - \bar{d})^2}{n-1}} = 2.63$$

$$t_{\alpha/2, n-1} = 2.131$$

Confidence Interval to estimate

Upper Limit L= -8.61

Lower Limit = -11.41

To sum up, there exists a confidence range interval between a lower limit of 11.41 and an upper limit of 8.61. Therefore, for methodological interventions in future populations with the same characteristics of a treatment group, the post-test performance will be increased to the performance of the pre-test in an interval of 8.61 to 11.41



2.4 Student T Test

The Student T test helps to accept or reject the zero hypothesis, showing in this way that the population averages are equal or unequal.

The Hypothesis test helps to determine that the population averages are not the same and that there exists an improvement. A T test for identical population is applied (Comparison of two averages with dependent samples)

Hypothesis:

H_0 : null hypothesis : $\mu_x = \mu_y$: equal averages

H_a : alternative hypothesis $\mu_x \neq \mu_y$: unequal averages

H_0 Rejection criteria

Rejection if: calculated $t >$ critical t

$$t_0 = \frac{\bar{d}}{S_d / \sqrt{n}} = t \text{ calculated in absolute value} = |t_0|$$

$$t_{\alpha/2, n-1} = t \text{ critical} = 2.131$$

Control Group Results

$$\bar{d} = \frac{\sum(X_i - Y_i)}{n} = \frac{\sum di}{n} = -4.80$$

$$S_d = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(di - \bar{d})^2}{n-1}} = 5.28$$

$$t_{\alpha/2, n-1} = 2.131$$

$$|t_0| = 3.64$$

3.64 > 2.131

Consequently, in the control group, the zero hypothesis is rejected in which the pre-test average is not the same as the post-test mean.

2.4.1 Treatment Group Results

$$\bar{d} = \frac{\sum(Xi - Yi)}{n} = \frac{\sum di}{n} = -10.01$$

$$Sd = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(di - \bar{d})^2}{n-1}} = 2.63$$

$$t_{\alpha/2, n-1} = 2.131$$

$$|t_0| = 15.22$$

$$15.22 > 2.131$$

Hence, in the treatment group, the null hypothesis is rejected. The pre-test mean is not the same as the post-test mean.

2.5 Fisher Test

Through the use of this test, the researcher attempts to determine that the population variances are equal or not and that there exists or not an identical variation. So, the Fisher test helps the analysis of variances or standard deviations by accepting or rejecting equality or inequality of the variances.

Hypothesis

Ho: null hypothesis

Ha: alternative hypothesis

"F" Test : Fisher test

$$H_0: \sigma_x^2 = \sigma_y^2$$

$$H_a: \sigma_x^2 \neq \sigma_y^2$$

σ_x^2 : Pre-test population variance

σ_y^2 : Post-test population variance

$$H_0: \frac{\sigma_x^2}{\sigma_y^2} = 1$$

$$H_a: \frac{\sigma_x^2}{\sigma_y^2} \neq 1$$

$$F_0 = \frac{s_x^2}{s_y^2} : F \text{ calculated}$$

Rejection criteria for the zero hypothesis

Reject H_0 if:

$$F_0 > F_{\alpha/2, nx-1, ny-1} \text{ Right side}$$

or

$$F_0 < F_{1-\alpha/2, nx-1, ny-1} \text{ Left side}$$

s_x^2 : Pre-test sample variance

s_y^2 : Post-test sample variance

$nx = ny = 16$: Number of students

$$\alpha/2 = 0.025$$

$$1 - \alpha/2 = 0.9775$$

$$F_{\alpha/2, nx-1, ny-1} \text{ Right side} = 0.349$$

$$F_{1-\alpha/2, nx-1, ny-1} \text{ Left side} = 2.86$$

2.5.1 Control Group Results

s_x^2 : Pre-test sample variance = 21.06

s_y^2 : Post-test sample variance = 16.71

$$F_0 = \frac{s_x^2}{s_y^2} := 1.26 = F \text{ calculated}$$

Therefore:

$$1.26 > 0.349$$

$$1.26 < 2.86$$

Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected in which variances are equal and it can be said that the variance in the pre-test population is greater than that in the post-test population. This statistical demonstration and estimation reinforces the approach that the methodological application that was proposed in this thesis enhances students' performance. It is clearly observed that after applying the methodologies, the variation in the control group students' performance also decreased. In other words, the knowledge became more homogeneous.

2.5.2 Treatment Group Results

Sx^2 : Pre-test sample variance =11.05

Sy^2 : Post-test sample variance =12.83

$$F_0 = \frac{Sx^2}{Sy^2} = 0.86 = F \text{ calculated}$$

As:

$0.86 > 0.349$

$0.86 < 2.86$

Therefore, the zero hypothesis is rejected. In this hypothesis, variances are equal and it is said that the variances in the pre-test population and the post-test population are different. This demonstration and statistical estimation reinforce the approach that the proposed methodological application in this thesis supports the students' performance. In addition, it is observed that after applying the methodologies, the variation in the treatment group students' performance increased, which is explainable due to the preferential attention applied to the treatment group.



3. Qualitative Data

To analyze the qualitative data, it was necessary to collect important information in two ways. The first one was the use of an anecdotal observation record. Through it, the researcher was able to analyze different aspects related to participants' way of collaborating, interacting and engaging with the activities provided. The second way to collect data was by interviewing participants at the end of the study in order to analyze reflections on the improvement of pragmatic skills while working on collaborative group work activities.

3.1 Analysis of Anecdotal Observation Records

During the development of the last activity of each topic, the researcher used an anecdotal observation record in order to obtain meaningful information about participants' performance by taking into account the way of collaborating with others, interacting properly, and the degree of engagement in the fulfillment of the activities. In that way, important information could be gathered in order to be discussed.

There were four groups of four students each. Each group had to make its presentation in front of all the class. That means that each group had to organize the manner in which to collaborate with each other so that they could finish each activity on time. Otherwise, all members of the group would not have had a grade for the activity. The analysis of a groups' performance will be done as follows:

For the first activity, group 1 evidenced an active engagement for the development of the task. They started giving ideas in order to invent a musical instrument. However, participants did not use the target language to communicate properly. All the members with one exception paid attention to other members when

they were talking. One of the members of the group was in charge of the design of the musical instrument because she was really good at drawing. After four minutes, the members of that group did not talk (even in their native language), but they looked tired. It was evident that members of that group did not get along well. Despite that, one member of the group and the researcher motivated them to work properly to finish their work on time. The participants did not have the experience of working collaboratively. That is why after their presentations, the teacher-researcher emphasized the correct way of helping each other by dividing the work equally according to their abilities.

During the evaluation of the project of the second topic, group 1 had problems in organizing their work because one member of the group was missing. It seemed they did not want to collaborate properly, but they were motivated to finish their job on time. Their performance was not good enough during the first five minutes. They started laughing during their presentation. Their disorganization was clear to see and their poor engagement was very obvious. It could be inferred that the missing member had an essential role within the group. The lack of vocabulary related to the topic produced a lack of motivation to complete the activity assigned to them. Interactions were made by using their native language most of the time.

For the third activity, participants showed a more organized way of working. That may possibly be the result of reflections carried out by participants with the assistance of the teacher-researcher. Students were conscious that they had to work collaboratively in order to get good grades and get along with partners. Also, participants were motivated to use a set of pragmatic expressions which were helpful to communicate properly. During the oral presentation of that group, participants

looked more serious than before. They could explain coherently a natural disaster which occurred in Ecuador. Participants respected the time provided so that they could have free time after finishing their work. Interaction and engagement aspects improved thanks to the contributions of all members of the group. It was also observed that participants were curious to know the meaning and context in which to use the pragmatic expressions, but they did not use any of them during the activity because it was optional to use them freely while talking to others.

In the evaluation of the fourth topic, participants showed a lot of creativity, engagement, and interaction since they had to invent a recipe to be prepared in their homes and to be shared in class. Participants started getting used to how to work in groups, respecting the time limit, and using pragmatic expressions with the other members of each group. When participants presented their projects, all the groups were surprised and excited to know how they prepared each recipe. They were able to have a good time by trying different dishes. A key element during the evaluation of this activity was the responsibility that the teacher-researcher gave to the participants when they had to evaluate another group. It seemed they felt important and interested to listen to the presentation of each project so that they could compare these with their own project. Thus, participants encouraged each other by using pragmatic expressions properly.

In the development of the last evaluation, participants had to use pragmatic expressions when they wanted to speak. During that activity, each person was in charge of having a role in a trial where they had to decide if a woman was innocent or not for some crime. Unfortunately, during that evaluation, some participants did not show a coherent attitude toward the setting and role assigned. Obviously, some



participants spoke more than others, but they were able to enjoy and use English without worrying if their grammar was correct or not.

The aspects regarding collaboration, engagement, interaction were not taking into account with the appropriate consideration at the beginning of the treatment. However, students showed their enthusiasm and a positive attitude after they finished the treatment.

Other groups showed similar attitudes towards the development and assessment of the activities planned for them.

3.2 Analysis of Participants interviews

After students worked on the collaborative activities planned for this study, each of the sixteen participants of the treatment group were interviewed to obtain reactions towards the use of the pragmatic expressions while they collaborated in groups.

Some meaningful transcriptions of participants' opinions obtained by the teacher-researcher include the following ideas:

- “The activities developed in class helped me to practice English a lot, especially when we talk about topics that are familiar to us without the stress of being afraid of speaking in front of others” (Evelyn).
- “I definitely enjoyed working in groups, especially with partners that I did not know very well. I got new friends and learned a lot with all the activities we did” (Sofia).



- “Despite I was confused with the instructions of the activities at the beginning of the sessions, I could get confidence with my partners because they helped me in a polite way” (Anita).
- “We had a funny and interesting time making decisions according to our opinions and preferences. We learned to solve problems and interact cordially” (Juana).

In this way, it could be deduced that participants took advantage of the activities provided not only to become more proficient at using English, but to overcome problems with different solutions that could be negotiated among group members.

Chapter IV – Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Conclusions

The improvement in use of pragmatic expressions while working with collaborative group work activities was applied at “Sagrados Corazones” Secondary School. There were two significant aspects considered for the development of this study. The first one was related to the use of pragmatic expressions that students could use freely when working with others. The set of expressions provided were related to how they agree, disagree, state encouragement, acknowledging contributions, showing politeness while working with others. They were explicitly taught so that they knew what expression to use depending on the context they would be involved. The second aspect had to do with the implementation of collaborative group work, which needed some training time to be developed properly.

The research study attempted to answer the following question: Do students improve their communicative and pragmatic language skills as a result of systematic collaborative group work? As a result of the statistical analysis, it was evidenced that after the methodology was applied, the treatment group showed a better performance at using pragmatic expressions while working in groups. The analysis of the participants' improvement showed that the pre-test mean score was 15.88 while the post-test mean score was 25.89 showing a significant progress of 10.01.

The use of collaborative group work activities motivated participants to work interdependently by setting shared goals for the groups. Participants were in charge of organizing their roles in order to complete the activities assigned. Social skills were crucial for the success of each activity. In addition, participants were set rules

that made them work actively during the sessions. By making them conscious about being active and responsible while working in groups, it was possible to achieve significant learning.

Working with others can be a little complicated if there is not the appropriate training, which means that the teacher has to establish specific rules to be fulfilled by students in order to have a pleasant environment that promotes the improvement of English skills.

The use of pragmatic expressions helps learners to be conscious of what to say to a specific person according to the contextualized situation. That is why the teacher-researcher proved that explicit instruction could help students enhance their pragmatic competence when working with others in a collaborative way.

2. Recommendations

I strongly suggest that this type of studies can be used with students from when they are children so that when they get older, they can have enough social skills to collaborate and participate actively in groups. It was evidenced that teenagers did not show a correct attitude because of their lack of maturity. However, it is possible to set rules to work with them in order to avoid inconveniences.

The use of pragmatic expressions can help students express ideas in a correct way depending on the context where they are used. That is why I suggest teachers use a set of useful expressions that students can use according to their gender and age. However, specific pragmatic functions must be focused on for the development of more specific tests.

It is relevant to evaluate the significance of the enhancing of pragmatic skills by carrying out the treatment for longer than two and a half months. Pragmatics should be considered as an important issue to be taught in class.

Finally, the collaborative group work techniques should be used to motivate students to work with others. However, a recommendation for further research study may be the implementation of different collaborative techniques considering the English proficiency of learners.

In summary, the present research study has aimed to make a contribution to foreign language learning. The significant results could be applied to different educational situations to improve social skills and pragmatic competence. The main impact when using pragmatic expressions and collaborative group work activities was to prepare students to become collaborative, polite, and independent to organize their work, analyze problems and find solutions not only in class but in real life contexts.



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TABLES

TABLE 1: Taguchi's table: Pre-post Comparison Studies with or without a Control Group

Table 1 Pre-post comparison studies with or without a control group (k = 31)

Study	Design	Participants L2	Pragmatic target(s)	Treatment type	Outcome measure(s)	Data	Results	Evidence of effectiveness
Alc'n-Soler & Guzman-Pitarch (2013)	Pre-post	Spanish L1 (n = 92)	English Refusal	Explicit	Interview	Freq	Effective	Significant pre-post gain (<i>t</i> -test).
Belz & Vyatkina (2005)	Pre-post	Mixed L1s (n = 16)	German Modals	Explicit	Online communication	Freq	Effective	Frequency of modals increased by 22 times after instruction.
Bouton (1994)	Pre-post	Mixed L1s (n = 14)	English Implicature	Explicit	MCQ	Score	Effective on some implicature	Significant pre-post gain (<i>t</i> -test).
Cunningham & Vyatkina (2012)	Pre-post	English (n = 9)	German Politeness modals & subjunctive	Explicit	Online discussion	Qual	Effective	Appropriate use of target forms in posttest.
Cohen & Tarone (1994)	Pre-post/ Mixed L1s control	(n = 25)	English Opinion	Explicit	Essays	Rating	Effective	TG outperformed CG at posttest (<i>t</i> -test).
da Silva (2003)	Pre-post/ Spanish L1 control	(n = 14)	English Refusal	Explicit	Role play	Qual	Effective	TG produced more indirect refusals and supporting moves at posttest.
Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh (2008)	Pre-post/ Iranians control	(n = 52)	English Request & apology	Explicit	Recognition task; DCT rating	Score; Effective		Significant interaction effect of time and group (MANOVA).
Eslami-Rasekh	Pre-post/ Iranians		English Request, apology, Explicit	MCQ	Score	Effective		TG outperformed

Table 1 Continued

Study	Design	Participants L2	Pragmatic target(s)	Treatment type	Outcome measure(s)	Data	Results	Evidence of effectiveness
Fukuya & Zhang (2002)	Pre-post/ control	Chinese L1 (n = 24)	English Request	Implicit	DCT	Rating	Effective	TG outperformed CG at posttest. (ANOVA).
Halenko & Jones (2011)	Pre-post	Chinese L1 (n = 26)	English Request	Explicit	DCT	Rating	Effective	Significant gain for TG but not for CG (<i>t</i> -test).
Ishida (2007)	Pre-post/ control	Mixed L1s (n = 6)	Japanese Speech style	Explicit	MAQ	Freq	Effective	TG commented on speech style 11 times more often than CG.
Iwai (2013)	Pre-post/ control	Mixed L1s (n = 28)	Japanese Interactional marker	Explicit	Conversation	Freq	Effective	Over 70% of TG group produced the target form but nobody in the CG (0%).
Johnson & deHaan (2013)	Pre-post	Japanese L1 (n = 22)	English Request & apology	Strategic instruction	DCT	Rating	Effective on appropriateness but not on accuracy	Significant gain for appropriateness but not for accuracy (<i>t</i> -test).
Kakegawa (2009)	Pre-post	English L1 (n = 11)	Japanese Sentence final particles	Explicit	Emails	Freq	Effective	Frequency of particles increased by almost three times after instruction.

Table 1 Continued

Study	Design	Participants L2	Pragmatic target(s)	Treatment type	Outcome measure(s)	Data	Results	Evidence of effectiveness
Kondo (2008)	Pre-post	Japanese L1 English Refusal (<i>n</i> = 38)		Explicit	Oral DCT	Freq	Effective	Frequency of strategy use changed by 11–20% toward NS baseline data.
Liddicoat & Crozet (2001)	Pre-post-English L1 delay	English L1 (<i>n</i> = 10)	French Structure of small talk	Explicit	Role play	Freq	Effective on content but not from 0% to 86%; on forms	Content increase from 10% to 60%. Form increase
Louw et al. (2010)	Pre-post	Chinese L1 (<i>n</i> = 3)	English Interview skills	Explicit	Mock job interview	Rating	Effective	Interview skills ratings improved by about 50% at posttest.
Lyster (1994)	Pre-post-English L1 delay/ control	English L1 (<i>n</i> = 106)	French Address forms	Explicit	Written task; Oral task; MCQ	Rating; Score	Effective on written task & MCQ only	Significant interaction effect between time and group (ANOVA).
Martinez-Flor (2008)	Pre-post	Spanish L1 (<i>n</i> = 38)	English Request	Inductive and deductive	Role play	Freq	Effective	Request modifiers increased from 25.6% to 74.4%.
Narita (2012)	Pre-post/Mixed L1s control	Mixed L1s (<i>n</i> = 41)	Japanese Hearsay expression	Implicit	Knowledge tests; Oral production	Score; Rating	Effective	Significant interaction effect between time and group (ANOVA).

Table 1 Continued

Study	Design	Participants L2	Pragmatic target(s)	Treatment type	Outcome measure(s)	Data	Results	Evidence of effectiveness
Nguyen (2013)	Pre-post- delay/ control	Vietnamese L1 (n = 50)	English Criticisms modifiers	Explicit	DCT; Role play	Freq; Oral peer feedback	Effective	EG outperformed CG at posttest (Mann-Whitney test).
Safont (2004)	Pre-post	Spanish L1 (n = 160)	English Request	Explicit	DCT; Role play	DCT	Effective only on DCT	Significant pre-post increase in frequency (<i>t</i> -test).
Sardegna & Molle (2010)	Pre-post	Japanese L1 (n = 5)	English Reactive tokens	Explicit & implicit	Online discussion	Qual	Effective	Target forms emerged at post, but negative L1 transfer remained.
Sykes (2009, 2013)	Pre-post	Mixed L1 (n = 53 & 25)	Spanish Request & apology	Implicit	DCT	Freq	Effective for apology only	1–6% gain for request strategies; 49% gain for apology strategies.
Tan & Farashaian (2012)	Pre-post/ control	Malay L1 (n = 60)	English Request	Explicit	DCT; AJ-listen; AJ-read	Score	Effective	TG outperformed CG at posttest (<i>t</i> -test).
Taylor (2002)	Pre-post	L1 not reported (n = 16)	Spanish Gambits	Explicit	Discussion; Role play	Freq	Effective on discussion only	Significant pre-post gain for discussion, but not for role play (<i>t</i> -test).
Us'-Juan (2013)	Pre-post	Spanish L1 (n = 10)	English Refusal	Explicit	DCT	Freq	Effective	Significant pre-post gain (<i>t</i> -test).

Table 1 Continued

Study	Design	Participants L2	Pragmatic target(s)	Treatment type	Outcome measure(s) Data	Results	Evidence of effectiveness
Utashiro & Kawai (2009)	Pre-post	Mixed L1s (n = 24)	Japanese Reactive tokens	Explicit	Recognition Score & production test	Effective	Significant pre-post gain (ANOVA).
Van Compernolle (2011)	Pre-post	English L1 (n = 1)	French Address forms	Explicit	Awareness Qual interview	Effective	Expression of more nuanced understanding of address forms.
Wishnoff (2000)	Pre-post/ Mixed L1s control (n = 26)	English Hedging		Explicit	Planned & Freq unplanned writing task	Different gain by TG outperformed CG at posttest (t-test).	
Yoshimi (2001)	Pre-post/ Mixed L1s control (n = 17)	Japanese Interactional discourse marker		Explicit	Story telling Freq	Effective	Discourse marker increased from 0.02 to 0.39/clause for TG. No change for CG.

Note. MAQ: metapragmatic awareness questionnaire. AJ: appropriateness judgment task. MCQ: multiple-choice questionnaire. DCT: discourse completion test. Explicit: instruction with metapragmatic information. Implicit: instruction without metapragmatic information. Delay: delayed posttest. TG: treatment group. CG: control group. Freq: frequency count of target strategies and forms. Qual: Qualitative analysis of conversations and verbal reports.



ANNEXES

Annex 1: Informed Consent from School Authorities

Cuenca, 14 de enero de 2013

Doctor

VICENTE SARMIENTO

VICERECTOR DE LA UNIDAD EDUCATIVA

SAGRADOS CORAZONES

Ciudad

De mi consideración:

Uno de los desafíos como maestros de vocación es el lograr que nuestros educandos sean actores activos de su aprendizaje. Para ello, es importante que ellos aprendan a cooperar de manera eficaz dentro del aula. Uno de los procedimientos más potentes para el aprendizaje no solo de una asignatura sino de valores gira en torno al aprendizaje cooperativo, el cual es una de las claves para la mejora de las relaciones interpersonales las cuales día a día son de mayor importancia en nuestro medio.

Por lo expuesto, yo, Ruth Elizabeth Narea Tenesaca, profesora de Inglés de la Unidad Educativa “Sagrados Corazones” solicito a usted comedidamente se sirva autorizar la aplicación de mi proyecto de tesis de maestría titulado: “**Collaborative Language Learning and the Enhancement of Pragmatic Skills based on Group Work in a Pre-Intermediate Class in Sagrados Corazones School**” (Aprendizaje



cooperativo de una lengua y el mejoramiento de habilidades pragmáticas basadas en grupos de trabajo en una clase pre-intermedia en el colegio “Sagrados Corazones”). El mencionado tema fue ya aprobado por el Comité Universitario de la Universidad de Cuenca, en donde estoy cursando la Maestría en Lengua Inglesa y Lingüística Aplicada.

Al aplicar el proyecto propuesto, no se afectará las horas de clase de mis estudiantes ni sus calificaciones, más bien se logrará un notable mejoramiento académico y social. Dicho proyecto se lo realizará durante 64 horas clases con los segundos de bachillerato “A” y “C” y se tiene programado llevarlo a cabo desde el segundo quimestre hasta que se complete el período de 64 horas previamente planificadas.

Es importante recalcar que la información obtenida será totalmente confidencial, es decir será registrada de manera anónima y los resultados conseguidos serán presentados en términos generales, sin mencionar nombres o cursos.

Por la favorable atención que se digne dar a la presente, le antícpo mi agradecimiento.

Atentamente,

Ruth Elizabeth Narea Tenesaca



Annex 2: Student Informed Consent Form

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO DE PADREY/O MADRE DE FAMILIA, O REPRESENTANTE LEGAL

Uno de los desafíos como maestros de vocación es el lograr que nuestros educandos sean actores activos de su aprendizaje. Para ello, es importante que ellos aprendan a cooperar de manera eficaz dentro del aula. Uno de los procedimientos más potentes para el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje gira en torno al aprendizaje cooperativo, el cual es una de las claves para la mejora de las relaciones interpersonales las cuales día a día son de mayor importancia en nuestro medio. Por ello, la Licenciada Ruth Elizabeth Narea Tenesaca, docente de la asignatura de Inglés de la Unidad Educativa “Sagrados Corazones”, como parte de su Tesis de Maestría en Lengua Inglesa y Lingüística Aplicada, titulada “**Collaborative Language Learning and the Enhancement of Pragmatic Skills based on Group Work in a Pre-Intermediate Class in Sagrados Corazones School**”, se propone investigar la utilidad del aprendizaje cooperativo y el mejoramiento de habilidades pragmáticas basadas en grupos de trabajo en una clase de nivel pre-intermedio.

Para el efecto, solicito su colaboración en nombre de su hija para proceder a la aplicación y observación de la mencionada metodología en las clases de su representada, hecho que permitirá mejorar las prácticas docentes y metodológicas redundando en el eficaz aprendizaje de los estudiantes, quienes únicamente deberán asistir normalmente a sus clases de inglés con su profesora regular quien establecerá una serie de tareas relacionadas con las unidades del libro de trabajo “American More

4". Dichas tareas serán observadas para la recolección de datos pertinentes al proceso investigativo.

El estudio se llevará a cabo durante 64 períodos de clase en total y no afectará el rendimiento estudiantil en lo absoluto, pues implica el impartir las clases regulares en Inglés incluyendo la metodología propuesta, sin que esto signifique perjuicio alguno para los estudiantes con respecto a grupos similares que no participarán en la presente investigación.

La información obtenida es totalmente confidencial, es decir será registrada de manera anónima y los resultados conseguidos serán presentados en términos generales, sin mencionar nombres o cursos.

Es necesario mencionar que se cuenta con la debida autorización de las autoridades de la institución para la realización del mencionado proyecto.

Yo, _____ representante de la estudiante _____, del Segundo de Bachillerato _____, estoy de acuerdo en que mi hijo/ participe en este proyecto.

Firma: _____

C.I.:

Cuenca, 29 de enero de 2013



Annex 3: Rules for Collaborative Groupwork

SAGRADOS CORAZONES SCHOOL**RULES FOR COLLABORATIVE GROUPWORKS**

In order to have a great time learning English, it is necessary to consider some important rules to take into account when developing your activities in groups.

1. Be punctual. The English classroom is about 20 meters away from your regular classroom. Then, it will take you maximum 5 minutes to be in class after the school bell rings.
2. Be tolerant. There can be some partners' ideas you do not agree with. Show your respect by using the appropriate vocabulary to avoid inconveniences with others.
3. Be active. During the development of the activities, you will need to work with your group actively to finish the task. Do not wait others do everything for you.
4. Be honest. Each group will have the chance to organize the task or activity depending on each member's ability. Share your abilities in an honest way.
5. Be responsible. Each group will receive a set of materials (color cardboard, pencils, a pair of scissors, scotch tape, a ruler, and color markers) to use it during the next seven weeks. It is your responsibility to take care of it, by keeping it when the class is over.

6. Be motivated. If your attitude to work in your group is not good enough, you will feel bored and tired. It is necessary to motivate yourself to have a good time while working with others.
7. Be careful with your time. During the activities, you need to make sure you are doing a great job to be presented on time. One of you must be the official person to check and manage the time for each activity.
8. Be collaborative. Every single person who is part of your group is important to collaborate with the elaboration of the task. You need to organize who is in charge of doing a part of each task. Your collaboration will give you and your group really good grades.
9. Be sociable. It is necessary to get to know each member of the group so that you can feel comfortable when working together. Social relationships are necessary not only for a class, but for your life in other contexts.
10. Be happy. There will be activities in which you will have to interact with others. Your attitude needs to be positive and cheerful. You will be very happy when you receive some incentives when your work is done in the correct way.
11. Use the target language when working in groups so that you can really test yourself your language improvement.

**Annex 4: Anecdotal Observation Record****Anecdotal Observation Record**

Date and Time: _____

Observer: _____

Site/ Project: _____

	NAME:	NAME:	NAME:	NAME:
ASPECTS				
Collaboration				
Interaction				
Engagement				
Use of time				

**Annex 5: Pre- test****PRE-TEST QUIZ****NAME:** _____**DATE:** _____

1. Rank the following expressions that show agreement and disagreement from 1 to 5. (1 for the one that suggests the strongest agreement and 5 for the one that expresses the strongest disagreement) (5 points)

- ____ I'm afraid, I don't agree...
- ____ You can't be serious!
- ____ I couldn't agree with you more.
- ____ That's exactly how I feel.
- ____ That's not how I see it.
-

2. Scale the following phrases from the most polite to the most impolite. (1 for the most polite and 5 for the most impolite) (5 points)

May I say something here ? _____

Excuse me. Can I interrupt you for a moment ? _____

Hold on! _____

Sorry to interrupt, but... _____

Wait a minute! ... _____

3. Classify the expressions of praise and encouragement below according to where they fit best. (12 points)

1. What an imagination!
2. You figured it out!
3. You are very talented!
4. How clever of you!
5. First rate work
6. Outstanding performance
7. Take your time!
8. I wouldn't have thought about that!
9. Good thinking!
10. Give it your best shot
11. I'm sure you can do this.
12. Two thumbs up!

Expressions related to problem solving	Expressions that refer to creativity	Expressions that appreciate achievement	Expressions that display encouragement

4. Imagine the following situation: You are the chairperson in your group to lead a discussion. The group members are rather shy and reserved. How can you make them speak up? List down 5 expressions / sentences that could encourage them to take part in the discussion. (5 points)

5. Re-arrange the following statements to make a coherent conversation (8 points)

____ Monica: Well, I have something I'd like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively.

____ James: OK. I'll come to talk with you. I really want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspective as well.

____ Monica: Hey James. Can I talk with you for a moment?

____ Monica: I'm so sorry that you feel this way, James, but we need to deal with the issue we had. Just take a deep breath and try to understand my situation.

____ James: Well. Just give me some time to chill out.

____ James: Sorry. I'm quite busy now.

____ Monica: Mmm. What I'll do right now is to get some water and I'll be waiting for you in my office.

____ James: You should have thought about that before. I am not in the mood to say anything.



Annex 6: Post-test

POST-TEST QUIZ

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

TEACHER: Elizabeth Narea

3. Match Column A with Column B to make expressions. (10 points)

A

- a. You can't be _____ how I see it.
- b. May I say _____ imagination!
- c. How clever _____ on!
- d. That's not _____ your time!
- e. What an _____ serious!
- f. I couldn't agree _____ you for a moment?
- g. Hold _____ thought about that.
- h. Take _____ with you more.
- i. Can I interrupt _____ of you!
- j. I wouldn't have _____ something here?

B

4. Complete the following situations with the appropriate expressions from the box. (6 points)

You figured it out? You are very talented! That's exactly how I feel.

Good thinking! I'm sure you can do this. Your opinion is so relevant.



1. Your partner has great ideas to use in a debate that you are organizing. What would you say to your partner?

2. You have to solve a riddle with your friends. After a while your teacher comes to talk with your group. What does she say?

3. Your cousin has just won a painting contest. She is very excited about it. What would you tell her?

4. Your best friend is studying for a difficult exam. She is very nervous and needs some encouragement from you. What can you say?

5. You are the chairperson in a debate and there is someone who is very quiet. What can you tell that person?



6. You agree with something that was mentioned by your teacher.

3. Scale the following phrases from the most formal to the most informal. Give 1 point to the most formal, 2 to the next, etc. (5 points)

May I say something here? _____

Excuse me. Can I interrupt you for a moment? _____

Hold on! _____

Sorry to interrupt, but... _____

Wait a minute! ... _____

4. Imagine the following situation: You are invited to a party. At that party you are meeting many people from different countries. Somebody mentions that doing “limpias” is not a good idea. You need to argument good ideas to change that person’s mind. Write down a short dialogue. (9 points)



Annex 7: Lesson Plans

UNIDAD EDUCATIVA “SAGRADOS CORAZONES”

LESSON PLAN

1. DATOS INFORMATIVOS:

AREA: Foreign Language	SECOND BACHILLERATO	CLASS: A	LEVEL No. 1	SCHOOL YEAR: 2012 – 2013
SUBJECT: English	ENGLISH TEACHER(s): Lic. Elizabeth Narea	PERIODS OF CLASSES: 32		

2. INTEGRATIVE CROSS CURRICULAR AXIS:

- To develop a high level of competence, fluent the language skills, as an effective tool for their personal development for their own benefit as well as their Christian values.

3. EXIT PROFILE LEVEL A2:

By the end of this year, students will have reached the communicative competence for A2 proficiency level (basic user), and they will be able to:

- Understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g.. basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment),
- Communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple, direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.
- Describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate need.
- Understand, identify and produce longer, more detailed informational, transactional and expository texts (e.g. traveling forms, formal letters, biographies, etc.) as well as simple procedural descriptions and narratives (e.g. "how to" instructions and first-person stories),
- Be aware of some features that make their culture and the foreign culture different as well as develop attitudes to cope with such dissimilarities.

4. CURRICULAR BLOCK OBJECTIVES

To improve students' communicative and pragmatic language skills by using collaborative language teaching methodology focusing on group work related to the topics: Musical instruments, music, inventions, catastrophes, touristic places, teens' life.

TOPIC 1: MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS (6 HOURS OF 60 MINUTES)

DATE: APRIL 25 TO MAY 3, 2016

DEVELOPMENT CRITERION SKILLS	ESSENTIAL POINTS OF EVALUATION / ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS	EVALUATION ACTIVITIES / TIME	TEACHING AND LEARNING PRECISIONS	
			METHODOLOGIC STRATEGIES	RESOURCES
To give instructions and information about the way of working in collaborative groups.		Demographic test. (40 min)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksheets • Dictionary • Cardboard • Markers • Scissors • Drawings • Observational records
To design an appropriate setting environment for collaborative groups.	To set groups to discuss about the advantages of working in groups.	Group discussion (20 minutes)		

To evaluate students' pragmatic skills.	To complete a test.	----- -- Pre- test (60 minutes)		
To describe the form, use and origin of different musical instruments by working in groups.	To match the correct musical instrument with the corresponding picture. To analyze information, pictures and names to describe unusual musical instruments.	----- -- Warm up: Creating a logo and a name for the collaborative group work (10 minutes). Recognizing sounds that are produced by musical instruments. (10 minutes)	Listening game. Group participation	

	To invent a musical instrument.	<p>Matching musical instruments with the corresponding names. (20 minutes)</p> <p>Group work: Students use false and true information to describe different musical instruments. (20 minutes).</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-</p> <p>Warm up: Students are motivated to brainstorm vocabulary related to musical instruments (10) minutes</p> <p>Students share the answers</p>	<p>Individual and group participation</p> <p>Group work presentation.</p> <p>Oral group presentation</p>	
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		<p>about unusual musical instruments and check the correct answers (15)</p> <p>students create their own musical instrument (35 minutes)</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Students prepare an oral presentation about their musical instrument created to be presented in class (60 minutes)</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Students discuss and reflect with the teacher about the</p>	<p>Poster presentation in groups</p> <p>Feedback and evaluation</p>	
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		<p>way of collaborating each other to complete the activities organized for them. (60 minutes)</p>		
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Annex 8: Worksheets

“THE ENHANCEMENT OF PRAGMATIC SKILLS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING BASED ON COLLABORATIVE GROUP WORK IN A PRE-INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH CLASS IN “SAGRADOS CORAZONES” SECONDARY SCHOOL”

Topic: MUSIC

Objective: To discuss about different types of music.

ACTIVITY 1: Talk about different topics related to music. Follow the following rules:

RULES FOR SHARE 4 FIFTY SECONDS!

1. Each player in turn picks up a card.
2. They read in silence and think for ten seconds before they start to speak.
3. When one student starts, another student must check that person can speak for 50 seconds.
4. If the student speaks clearly, without hesitating or pausing too much, that person gets a point.
5. The winner is the player with more points at the end of the game.

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Music that is played in the buses	Music that is played in the countryside
Music for dancing	Music for Christmas
Folkloric music in my country	Music that my grandparents like
The national anthem of my country	Music for the beach

Music that reminds me of when I was a small child	Music in TV commercials
Classical music	My favorite lyrics
The music I'd like to have at my birthday party	My favorite singers
Music I don't like at all	Concerts I have been to
Orchestras in Cuenca	Sexist music

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**TOPIC: INVENTIONS**

Group's name: _____

Date: _____

ACTIVITY 1.- Each group has to choose a number from 1 to 4 and write it in a piece of paper in order to select an “invented sauce” that was prepared by the teacher.

ACTIVITY 2.- Complete the chart below with each group's ideas about the name and the ingredients of the sauce of your group.

Name	Ingredients



ACTIVITY 3.- PUT A CROSS (X) TO RANK THE QUALITY OF EACH GROUP'S ORAL PRESENTATIONS (5POINTS)

NAME OF THE DISH	Excellent	Very good	good	fair	poor
Strawberry pudding					
Passion fruit mousse					
Muffins					
Furious Dessert					

Describe your feelings about the development of this project.



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TOPIC: Touristic places

OBJECTIVE: To create a conversation to be presented orally in the class

ACTIVITY 4: Read the instructions to create a role-play.

GIVING ADVICE ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY

GROUP 1

1. Join to the assigned groups and choose a role-play situation card.
2. Follow the instructions of the cards provided.
3. Write down a short conversation and practice it with your group to role-play.
4. Present it to the class.

Student A: Imagine your friends and you are organizing a trip to St. Paul, Mississippi next month. You are very enthusiastic because your best friend lives in that state. You want to enjoy all the great touristic attractions around that place. You have heard that there was a landslide recently near Mississippi River, but you don't care about it. Use arguments to support the idea of going there with your friends.

Students B, C: Imagine your friends are organizing a trip to St. Paul, Mississippi next month. You are worried about the trip because you have seen on TV that landslides killed people near Mississippi River. Try to persuade your friends to go to

another place by giving them some advice. Think about the consequences that they may face if they decide to go there.

Student D: Imagine your friends and you are organizing a trip to St. Paul Mississippi next month. You are very nervous and unsecure to go because you have heard that there was a landslide recently near Mississippi River. Analyze some advice that your friends are going to tell you and make the decision of going or not.

GROUP 2

GIVING ADVICE ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY

1. Join to the assigned groups and choose a role-play situation card.
2. Follow the instructions of the cards provided.
3. Write down a short conversation and practice it with your group to role-play.
4. Present it to the class.

Student A: Imagine your friends and you are organizing a trip to China next month. You are very enthusiastic because your best friend lives in that state. You want to enjoy all the great touristic attractions around that place. You have heard that there was an earthquake recently in China, but you are not worried about it. Use arguments to support the idea of going there with your friend.

Students B, C: Imagine your friends are organizing a trip to China next month. You are worried about the trip because you have seen on TV that earthquake killed people in China. Try to persuade your friends to go to another place by giving them some advice. Think about the consequences that they may face if they decide to go there.

Student D: Imagine your friends and you are organizing a trip to China next month. You are very nervous and unsecure to go because you have heard that there was an earthquake recently in China. Analyze some advice that your friends are going to tell you and make the decision of going or not.

GROUP 3

GIVING ADVICE ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY

1. Join to the assigned groups and choose a role-play situation card.
2. Follow the instructions of the cards provided.
3. Write down a short conversation and practice it with your group to role-play.
4. Present it to the class.

Student A

Imagine your friends and you are organizing a trip to Russia next month. You are very enthusiastic because your best friend lives in that state. You want to enjoy all the great touristic attractions around that place. You have heard that there was an earthquake recently in Russia, but you don't care about it. Use arguments to support the idea of going there with your friends.

Students B, C

Imagine your friends are organizing a trip to Russia next month. You are worried about the trip because you have seen on TV that an earthquake killed people in Russia. Try to persuade your friends to go to another place by giving them some advice. Think about the consequences that they may face if they decide to go there.



Student D

Imagine your friends and you are organizing a trip to Russia next month. You are very nervous and unsecure to go because you have heard that there was an earthquake recently in Russia. Analyze some advice that your friends are going to tell you and make the decision of going or not.

GROUP 4

GIVING ADVICE ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY

1. Join to the assigned groups and choose a role-play situation card.
2. Follow the instructions of the cards provided.
3. Write down a short conversation and practice it with your group to role-play by using some expressions given by your teacher.
4. Present it to the class.

Student A: Imagine your friends and you are organizing a trip to Peru, Bolivia, and Chile next month. You are very enthusiastic because your best friend lives in that state. You want to enjoy all the great touristic attractions from those countries. You have heard that there were some floods recently in those countries, but you don't care about it. Use arguments to support the idea of going there with your friends.

Students: B, C

Imagine your friends are organizing a trip Peru, Bolivia, and Chile next month. You are worried about the trip because you have seen on TV that there were some floods that killed people in those countries. Try to persuade your friends to go to another



place by giving them some advice. Think about the consequences that they may face if they decide to go there.

Student D: Imagine your friends and you are organizing a trip to Peru, Bolivia, and Chile next month. You are very nervous and unsecure to go because you have heard that there were floods in those countries. Analyze some advice that your friends are going to tell you and make the decision of going or not.



Annex 9: Pragmatic expressions list

PRAGMATIC EXPRESSIONS LIST

The following expressions are going to be a reference for you in order to use them to communicate with others appropriately according to the context.

Expressions that show agreement and disagreement from 1 to 5. (1 for the one that suggests the strongest agreement and 5 to the one that expresses the strongest disagreement)

1. I couldn't agree with you more.
2. That's exactly how I feel.
3. I'm afraid, I don't agree
4. That's not how I see it.
5. You can't be serious!

Phrases to show politeness (1 is the most polite, 5 is the most impolite (5 points)

1. Excuse me. Can I interrupt you for a moment ?
2. May I say something here ?
3. Sorry to interrupt, but...
4. Wait a minute!
5. Hold on!



Expressions of praise and encouragement

1. What an imagination!
2. You figured it out!
3. You are very talented!
4. How clever of you!
5. First rate work
6. Outstanding performance
7. Take your time!
8. I wouldn't have thought about that!
9. Good thinking!
10. Give it your best shot
11. I'm sure you can do this.
12. Two thumbs up!

Expressions related to problem solving	Expressions that reveal creativity	Expressions that indicate achievement	Expressions that display encouragement
You figured it out! How clever of you! Good thinking!	You are very talented! What an imagination! I wouldn't have thought about that!	First rate work Two thumbs up! Outstanding performance!	Give it your best shot Take your time! I'm sure you can do this.